

**TELETUBBIES SPARK A NEW WORLD WAR**  
Innovative, clever - or just dumbing down?  
NEWS, PAGE 6

**WHY I STILL LOVE MADONNA**  
Suzanne Moore  
forgives her everything  
FEATURES, PAGE 14

**PHIL HAMMOND'S MEDICAL QUIZ**  
Test yourself and outsmart your doctor  
HEALTH, PAGE 15

**MUST NERDS RULE THE WORLD?**  
Why aren't more women in computers?  
NETWORK+, WITH PAGES OF JOBS

# THE INDEPENDENT

Tuesday 10 March 1998 45p (IRSp) No 3,554

## Freedom for McAliskey and her baby

By Andrew Buncombe and Ros Wynne Jones

ROISIN McAliskey, who was wanted in Germany on suspicion of being a member of an IRA bombing team which attacked a British army barracks, was freed last night.

In a dramatic decision the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said he would not allow Ms McAliskey to be extradited to Germany on the grounds that it would be "unjust and oppressive".

The 26-year-old, who was on bail residing at the Maudsley Hospital's mother and baby unit in south London, it is understood that an independent psychiatric report suggested that her health had been seriously undermined by her detention and was deteriorating while on remand.

"She is a free woman," a Home Office spokeswoman said last night. However, it was not clear where she would be returning home to Northern Ireland. Her mother, the former MP for Mid Ulster, Bernadette McAliskey, will travel to Britain from her home in Coalisland today to see her daughter, who will not leave the hospital until she is well enough.

The decision not to extradite Ms McAliskey, who was wanted in Germany for questioning over the June 1996 bombing attack on the British Army barracks in Osnabrück, last night sent shock waves around Westminster and Dublin. Her release



Roisin McAliskey: 'Health deteriorating in prison'

comes at a critical time in the peace talks and is certain to be condemned by Unionists.

However, it was welcomed by the Irish government, which said it was in the "wider interest of peace" and "would give heart" to those working towards peace. The Irish Foreign Minister, David Andrews, said in a statement: "I have long been concerned about the compelling humanitarian dimension to this case both for Roisin and her baby, Loimur."

Mr Andrews said he had repeatedly raised the issue in his contacts with the British government, including the meeting of the Anglo-Irish inter-governmental conference four days ago when he had "a full discussion of its implications" with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam.

"Today's decision not only serves to bring an end to the suf-

fering and uncertainty faced by Roisin McAliskey and her family but is also in the wider interest of peace and reconciliation in these days," he said.

Last night Mrs McAliskey said: "I'm relieved and delighted. We can now concentrate on getting her well again. Roisin is quite calm under the circumstances, but I don't think she really realises what is going on."

Ms McAliskey had been held on extradition charges since being arrested in Coalisland in November 1996. She was three months pregnant at the time, but despite this bail was refused. Weak, ill and suffering from a series of complications, she gave birth last summer to a baby girl weighing 5lb 13oz.

The Home Office statement issued last night said: "[Mr Straw] considers the medical evidence in her case would make the extradition unjust or oppressive". It added: "The Home Secretary has explained his decision to the German government. It does not reflect in any way on the fairness of the German legal system or on the quality of the extradition request."

However, Ms McAliskey's supporters have constantly dismissed the German authorities' contention that the former politics student was involved in the mortar attack.

The German government said last night that it could not comment on the decision until it had been made aware of all the reasons behind the move.

Darcey shows off Fonteyn's glitter



Ballet's gems: Dancer Darcey Bussell wearing some of Margot Fonteyn's jewellery, which is to be sold by Christies in London today. The diamond and gem brooch is estimated at £4-6,000; tourmaline and diamond earrings £1,200-1,500. Photograph: John Voss

## Commons toppers are old hat

By Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

THE COMMONS is to abolish the absurd rule that requires MPs making a point of order to wear a top hat, or other form of "cover", during a parliamentary vote.

The last occasion television viewers might have seen the practice was on Friday, when points of order were raised during votes on the Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Bill.

A report from the Commons Modernisation Committee said yesterday:

"At present, if a Member seeks to raise

a point of order during a division, he or she must speak seated and covered."

In practice, this means that an opera hat which is kept at each end of the Chamber has to be produced and passed to the Member concerned.

"This particular practice has almost certainly brought the House into greater ridicule than almost any other, particularly since the advent of television. We do not believe that it can be allowed to continue."

The committee recommendation - which will be accepted by the House - is that in future, such points of order should either be made directly to the person in the chair, or more publicly, from one of the benches closest to the Speaker's chair, where the complainant can clearly be seen and heard.

The committee also recommended that another archaic practice, "spying stragglers", to force a vote on clearing the Chamber of public and press, should be replaced by a more modern device to test the presence of a 40-strong quorum of MPs in the House.

## Louise must wait again as judges decide her fate

By David Usborne in Boston

LAWYERS for Louise Woodward, the British au pair convicted of manslaughter after the death of baby Matthew Eappen, indicated yesterday that in the event of a retrial they would ask for the victim's body to be exhumed.

The possibility of a whole new trial for Woodward, 20, emerged as the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court heard appeals from both prosecution and the defence. Even with frequent interjections from the panel of seven judges, the hearing lasted barely 50 minutes.

The defence wants the court to overturn the manslaughter conviction, itself reached only when the trial judge, Hiller Zobel, unilaterally substituted it for the jury's original sentence of second-degree murder. Woodward's lawyers argued that they were unfairly denied access to the baby's skull, which could have proved their case that he died of an injury, not old, and not inflicted, as charged, on 4 February last year. It would be in order to examine the skull that the defence would seek an exhumation in an eventual retrial.

The prosecution, by contrast, attempted to demonstrate that in reducing the sentence and releasing Woodward on time served of 279 days, Judge Zobel abused his powers under Massachusetts statutes. It wants the second-degree conviction reinstated and Woodward sent back to prison to serve life.

The suspense for Woodward, and for the two fiercely-opposing camps supporting her and supporting the Eappen family could last months longer.



Appeal: Louise Woodward in court yesterday

Technically, the judges have 120 days to vote on their ruling in the affair.

When it comes, it will not be read in open court but handed down in writing form.

Woodward, who has been unable to leave Massachusetts since the end of her trial, arrived at court with her parents, Susan and Gary Woodward, who have been over to Boston from England for several days.

Elaeoc Whitfield Sharp, a member of the defence team, said that Woodward, who has been staying at her home north of Boston, had been trying to keep herself distracted, in spite of being unable legally to work or study.

As well as going to the gym and reading, she "vacuums the house and pets the cat" she said.

After the hearing, a statement read outside the court on behalf of Debra

Eappen, Matthew's mother, asked that the focus of public attention be switched away from Woodward and back to Matthew, who was nine months old when he died from the head injuries that the prosecution says were inflicted by Woodward shaking and slapping his head.

"We will never know what great things Mattie would have achieved and we will never know the joy he would have brought to his family. We will never know that because Louise Woodward took Mattie away from us," the statement said.

Both sides were cautious before attempting to interpret the rapid back-and-forth of yesterday's courtroom proceedings. Harvey Silvergate, for the defence, noted however the aggressiveness of Justice Charles Fried as he repeatedly interrupted Sabita Singh, a prosecution lawyer. "I'm encouraged by how pointed some of his questions were," Mr Silvergate said.

After the hearing, the defence conceded it could not rule out the possibility of a retrial. "We are entitled to an acquittal or a dismissal of the charges," Andrew Good of the defence team insisted. "Nothing would satisfy us other than that."

But about the prospect of a new trial, he added: "We would have an unconvicted client. We would not consider that a loss."

All of the defence team, including its most famous member, Barry Scheck, promised that they would continue to represent Woodward at a new trial, even though the Woodward family has already said it would not contest a decision to leave the manslaughter conviction intact because of a lack of funds.

## Allies pile pressure on Serbs

By Rupert Cormwell

AS the major powers tightened pressure on Yugoslavia yesterday, relatives of the ethnic Albanians killed by Serbian police in Kosovo last week refused to claim the bodies for burial, accusing President Slobodan Milošević of trying to hide evidence of atrocities.

In response to the outcry over what is widely feared could turn into a new Bosnia, the six countries of the Contact Group - Britain, the US, France, Italy, Russia and Germany - moved to have the UN Security Council impose an arms embargo on Yugoslavia, and threatened to freeze assets held abroad by Yugoslavia and Serbia, its main remaining member republic.

Robin Cook, Foreign Secretary, who chaired yesterday's foreign ministers' meeting at Lancaster House, London, called the measures "very tough". Russia was reluctant to accept the full package.

In Kosovo, families in Serbia refused to bury some 60 victims, said to include 14 women and 12 children, and are demanding that foreign pathologists be allowed to conduct full and independent post-mortems. In the capital Pristina, at least 50,000 ethnic Albanians marched in a peaceful rally against President Milošević.

Powers get tough, page 9

## 5 facts about stalkers

By Rupert Cormwell

①

about 1,000 people in the UK have been stalked under these laws in the last 8 months.

③

one survey estimates that 1 in 5 British women have been stalked.

④

20% of female victims in the UK previously knew their stalkers.

⑤

princess Diana, Victoria Beckham and Spice Girls have all been stalked.

tonight  
8.30pm on 5

TOMORROW

■ A new icon for our times – art at the heart of Britain

■ Behind the song: The lovelorn secret of Radiohead's Creep

■ When pop stars find God, or Buddha or Krishna...

CONTENTS

News	2-8
Foreign	9-11
Visual arts	12
Obituaries	13
Health	14
Features	15
Leaders & letters	16
Comment	17
Business & City	18-23
Sport	24-28
Crosswords	28, The Eye 10
Games	The Eye 10
TV & radio	The Eye, II & 12



Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the raw material for UK news papers in the first half of 1997.

# BSE probe granted more time by Blair

TONY Blair last night granted the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) inquiry team more time to consider the growing mountain of evidence.

The Appeal Court judge Lord Justice Phillips, heading the panel of three, said on the first day of the hearings in London that he needed six more months. "Having analysed the work to be done, I have concluded that it cannot be completed within a timescale that will result in a report at the end of the year," he said. "I am not prepared to contemplate a report that is superficial because it has been too rushed, and I don't believe that those who are anxiously looking forward to receiving this report would wish us to sacrifice thoroughness for speed."

Under the original timetable Lord Justice Phillips was to have submitted his report on the findings by December 30. Last

night Dr Jack Cunningham, the Minister of Agriculture, confirmed in a parliamentary answer that the Government had agreed to the judge's request. A revised date for delivery of the report had been set of 30 June 1999.

Lord Justice Phillips said it was only during the last month that he had come to appreciate the true scale of the task involved. Five government departments, with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Health at the forefront, had dealings with BSE over a period of about 10 years. During that time about 150 ministers had served in the relevant departments and he had written to them all. So far, more than 100 scientists and 300 civil servants and ministers had been contacted.

The aim of the inquiry – which is expected to cost more than £2m – is to explore the causes

of "mad cow disease" and the way in which the crisis was handled by civil servants and ministers. Over the next four months, politicians, scientists, civil servants, representatives of the beef and food industry, and relatives of victims of nvCJD. The NFU shares with the victims a wish to establish the facts surrounding BSE.

Counsel for Maff and the Department of Health expressed sympathy for the families of victims of CJD and said

they would do everything in their power to assist the inquiry. Stuart Isaacs OC, for the NFU, said: "It is impossible to estimate the human tragedy of the disease for its victims and their families. The NFU shares with the victims a wish to establish the facts surrounding BSE."

David Body, solicitor for the victims' families, said his

clients were not seeking scapegoats but believed that those who had made decisions on public policy concerning BSE should be held accountable. "They want to ensure that nothing like the BSE epidemic ever happens again," he said.

Roger Tomkins, whose vegetarian daughter, Clare, is dying of nvCJD, gives evidence today.

Nurse and Yusef Hassan, the parents of Gulcan, 19, the youngest victim of CJD, at the BSE inquiry. Photograph: David Rose

## Hospital investigates suspected errors in cervical screening

By Jeremy Laurence

Health Editor

WERE referred for further investigation by colposcopy – visual examination of the cervix using a specially adapted microscope – are understood to have been misdiagnosed.

One woman who was cleared as normal a year ago is believed now to have cervical cancer. Pre-cancerous changes

should have been visible at her earlier examination.

Colposcopy examinations are normally performed by doctors and it is understood that it is the work of one that is being investigated. No patients are being recalled while the initial checks are being carried out.

The hospital last night said:

"As part of the Trust's standard review procedures, a small number of colposcopy cases are being reviewed with outside experts. The trust cannot discuss the treatment of individual patients nor is it possible to comment further on the review until it is complete."

It added that the colposcopy

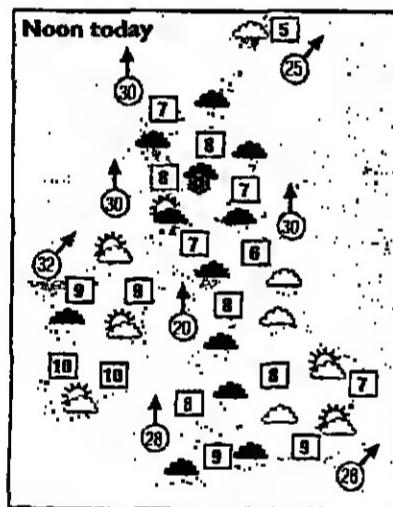
service was "working in accordance with the latest national guidelines issued by the NHS".

Juliette Patrick, director of the national screening programme, said women with high-grade abnormalities detected by cervical smear or with persistent low-grade abnormalities should be referred for colposcopy.

If the abnormalities were seen they would be treated immediately and, in nine out of 10 cases, a biopsy, a sample of tissue, should be taken.

However, if no abnormality was seen, possibly because the lesion was too far up the cervical canal, and no biopsy was taken, it could be missed.

WEATHER



Today's forecast

Scotland will have a wet and windy day with the rain falling as snow over the peaks. Northern Ireland will brighten in the afternoon after a wet morning, but there will still be scattered blustery showers. Wales, northern and western England will start dry and bright but cloud will quickly thicken with rain setting in. The rain may be heavy enough to bring swollen flooding to parts of Wales, South-east England and East Anglia. It will start cold with some sunshine but rain will arrive

at least seven women at St George's Hospital, Tooting, who had abnormal smears and

High tides

	AM	HT	PM	HT
London		12.19	6.7	
Liverpool	09.40	8.5	22.04	8.6
Aberdeen	05.23	11.7	17.53	12.1
Hall (Albert Dock)	04.42	7.7	16.57	8.0
Glasgow	10.51	3.1	23.59	2.9
Dun Laoghaire	07.06	4.0	22.31	3.8



Lighting-up times

	18.17	19.02	19.05	19.06	19.43
Belfast					06.49
Birmingham					06.52
Cardiff					06.34
Glasgow					06.43
London					06.24
Manchester					06.34
Newcastle					10.00

	18.17	19.02	19.05	19.06	19.43
Belfast					06.49
Birmingham					06.52
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# Monty's Bafta glory leaves Rowan without a bean

By Kate Watson-Smyth

THE highest grossing British film, *The Full Monty*, has swept the board in the nominations for the 50th British Academy Film awards it was announced last night.

The film, starring Robert Carlyle, received 11 nominations including best film, best original screenplay and best actor. *Mrs Brown*, starring Dame Judi Dench and Billy Connolly, was nominated eight times, but

*Benn: the Ultimate Disaster Movie* – the second most successful British film made – was ignored by the judges.

Despite being largely panned by the critics, *Bean*, featuring the bumbling nerd created by Rowan Atkinson, grossed more than \$218m world-wide and has still to be released in Japan. Only *Four Weddings and A Funeral* was more successful, taking \$225m. *The Full Monty* has so far made \$203m.

Peter Bennett-Jones, Rowan Atkinson's agent, said he was not surprised by the nominations. "We are all very proud of the film we have made and I was slightly irritated that *Bean* did not receive any nominations at all because it was a very successful film, but that is just indicative of the attitude."

"There is a preconception that a film like that will be rubbish and there is a certain amount of prejudice against big broad comedies, but it was a good piece of work and we are very happy with it," he said.

Caroline Westbrook, reviews editor of *Empire* magazine, said that Baftas tended to concentrate on critical acclaim.

"*Bean* did extremely well but it was not recognised for its screenplay or fine acting so you would not expect it to be nominated," she said. "It was fine for what it was, but you should not equate box-office success with awards-worthy films."

Despite the lack of nominations for *Bean*, British films have received widespread recognition this year, but *The Full Monty* will face stiff competition in the best film category against *LA Confidential*, *Mrs Brown* and *Nil by Mouth*.

Helena Bonham Carter, Kathy Burke and Dame Judi took three of the four nominations for best actress and Robert Carlyle, Billy Connolly and Ray Winstone were all nominated for best actor. Kevin Spacey and Kim Basinger were also both nominated for their performances in *LA Confidential*.

employment fail, has also been nominated for the best original screenplay where it is competing against *Boogie Nights*, *Mrs Brown* and *Nil by Mouth*.

The film, tracing the fortunes of a group of British steel-workers who turn to stripping after their attempts to find

British film industry. The creation of this award could not be more timely."

Tim Angel, the chairman of Bafta, said: "British films are enjoying a renaissance and the awards will contribute to this climate of confidence and optimism."

Lord Puttnam, vice-president of the British Film and Television Arts, said: "They should reflect the UK's position as a leading film-making nation on a world stage."

The winners will be announced on 19 April.

**ATKINSON AND BLAIR**  
Rowan Atkinson went to the same school as Tony Blair. The Prime Minister was 13 and already a model pupil in the top form at Durham's historic Chorister school when Atkinson arrived at the age of 11. Former headmaster Canon John Grove says the two boys were like chalk and cheese: "Rowan was shy with a slight stammer and a slightly rubbery face, just like the one he has now." Of Mr Blair he says: "He was outgoing. If you needed a volunteer, he was the boy who always had his hand up."

**HOW BEAN WAS BORN**  
Atkinson based *Bean* on what he was like as a nine-year-old. At school he was mercilessly teased by playground bullies who thought he looked like an alien. His nicknames were Doople, Zoonie, Greenman and Gruman. "There's a lot of Mr Bean in me," says Atkinson. "He's socially inept, selfish and has no manners – yet he can be sweet, innocent and well-meaning."

**ATKINSON THE RECLUSE**  
One of the more reclusive figures in British showbusiness, Atkinson, 43, owns a £500,000 18th-century rectory in Oxfordshire – where he lives with his wife Sunetra and their two children – and a £650,000 house in Chelsea.

**BOOMING BEAN**  
*Mr Bean* is the most popular comedy on British television. Audiences reach as high as 18m; even repeats attract 12m viewers. It has been shown in 94 countries and sold more than seven million videos but only 14 half-hour episodes have been made.



Supernatural: A scene from the 1997 hit *Bean: the Ultimate Disaster Movie*, starring the rubber-faced comedian

## The recluse who engineered his way to stardom

### IN THE NEWS

#### ROWAN ATKINSON

BACK in his student days, Rowan Atkinson wanted to be an electrical engineer. It is an image that is hard to match with the rubber-faced comedian whose alter-ego, Mr Bean, is one of the best-known comic creations on British television, writes Kate Watson-Smyth.

The antics of the accident-prone *Bean* have delighted British audiences for years and he has become a national institution – even appearing on *Blind Date* – but it took Hollywood to propel him into superstardom.

The success of *Bean: The Ultimate Disaster Movie* helped Atkinson earn an estimated £11.5m last year – eclipsing established British stars including Lord Attenborough, Sir Anthony Hopkins and John Cleese.

In a nation currently obsessed with being cool, it is interesting that Mr Bean should have caught public imagination to such an extent. He epitomises the gawky, socially-incompetent outsider and looks like a put-upon Latin teacher. When thwarted, he is petulantly vengeful but when satisfied, he resembles a hideous cackling gargoyle.

The inspiration for Mr Bean has

long been debated and Atkinson's brother Rodney has been named as the most likely source, but it is a charge he vigorously denies.

A businessman who lives with their widowed mother in Northumberland, Rodney is possibly the only person in the UK to have read the Maastricht Treaty word for word. In 1993 he launched an unsuccessful case to have the former Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd prosecuted for treason.

However, Atkinson says Mr Bean is based on what he was like as a nine-year-old. Mercilessly teased at school, he was the butt of playground bullies who thought he looked like an alien and although a bright child he was quickly marked out as "strange". He claims that the age of 12 was the last time he "ever did something funny off stage or away from the TV cameras".

By the time he left prep school "adolescent self-consciousness had set in" and he became deadly serious. Now he insists he is "quiet, even dull" when not performing and "too self-conscious even to play charades".

His first public appearance was at the Edinburgh Festival at the age

of 17, but he was still not planning a career on the stage. He took a degree in electrical engineering at Newcastle University, gaining the highest marks in his year and believed that was where his future lay. But later at Oxford, studying for an MSc, he met up with Richard Curtis, writer of *Four Weddings and A Funeral*, in which Atkinson had a cameo, and co-writer of

the hugely popular *Blackadder* series. He also met the composer Howard Goodall, who wrote the themes for *Blackadder* and *The Thin Blue Line*, the less successful police comedy.

In 1976 Atkinson was spotted at the Edinburgh Festival by television producer John Lloyd. "I rushed backstage after the show and introduced myself. I was convinced he would be more famous than Chap-

lin," he said. Lloyd went onto produce Atkinson in *Not The Nine O'Clock News*, which also brought stardom to Pamela Stevenson, Griff Rhys Jones and Mel Smith.

He is famously reclusive and rarely gives interviews, preferring to live quietly with his wife Sunetra and their two children. Following the success of Mr Bean he is now planning to take a year off.

Peter Bennett-Jones, his agent, said: "Rowan is having a rest for a year and we will think about his next projects after that. We would never say never about another Bean film, but we are not thinking about it at the moment."

He also scotched rumours about a film being made around Atkinson's incompetent government agent from the Barclaycard advertisements.

## Python stars sue to regain control of 'Life of Brian'

By Rosa Prince

THE STARS of Monty Python yesterday launched an action in the High Court to try to win back control over their film *Life of Brian*.

The film, which chronicles the adventures of an unwilling messiah called Brian, has been controversial since its release in 1979 when it was labelled blasphemous by religious groups.

Now the Python team are suing the film's distributor, Paragon, for allowing *Life of Brian* to be cut without their permission and for licensing the film at a rate that they say was not businesslike.

They are also bringing an action against Channel 4 for showing the film under licence from Paragon when, according to James Munby QC, representing Python, the station knew the team was unhappy with the deal.

In 1981 the film was licensed to Channel 4 by Python's former distributor Hand Made, owned by the Beatle George Harrison, for £250,000 with the agreement that it would be shown no more than twice over the following five years.



Film in jeopardy: The Monty Python team still fear *Life of Brian* could be cut to quell accusations of blasphemy

"To grant rates of this sort in relation to a film for a period of 30 years when no one can foretell the nature of technology which may be in place down the line is little short of madness."

The High Court action came the day after the surviving Pythons – John Cleese, Michael Palin, Terry Jones, Eric Idle and Terry Gilliam – performed together for the first time in 18 years.

The sixth member of the group, Graham Chapman, who died 10 years ago, wrote much of the screenplay and starred as Brian, who in the film ends up on a cross while those around him sing "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life".

The Python team say it is scenes such as this and lines like: "He's not the messiah he's a very naughty boy", spoken by Brian's mum played by Terry Jones, which make the film ripe for censorship by those who even now fear it will give offence.

They accused Paragon of failing to include in licences an obligation that the film would not be cut.

The action, which is expected to last for three weeks, continues tomorrow.

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PENSIONS

## Rail regulator's progress checked by a stone

By Randeep Ramesh  
Transport Correspondent

IT IS a railway line that local groups fought to re-open. But last week, the railways' fat controller could have been forgiven for wishing it had never been built.

John Swift QC, the rail regulator and passenger's champion, survived what he described as "murderous assault" by stone-lobbing youths as he travelled in the driver's cab of a Lancashire train.

Mr Swift, whose nerve is not in doubt in City circles, was "badly shaken" after vandals from Darwen and Blackburn stoned the front windows of the driver's cab of the North Western Train service.

The attack took place last Friday – when Mr Swift was taking a train to Clitheroe for a meeting with local rail campaigners. Three years ago, they had successfully lobbied to get the Ribble Valley service reinstated.

According to Mr Swift: "We were tooling along and I was admiring the scenery and suddenly there were two shattering crashes ... It was an alarming and all too frequent indication of how the security of the railways and the people travelling on them must continue to be of prime concern."

Tough on crime and tougher on those who commit offences, Mr Swift was quick to attack – verbally – the vandals. "It

brought home to me how important it is to retain morale in the people we ask to run these trains in the face of murderous attempts by youngsters who should know better."

Mr Swift does not shrink a fight. Since the election of a Labour government he has roughed up the rail industry – considered by many of privatisation's critics to have been given an easy ride by the previous Conservative administration.

He has attacked Railtrack for "wholly unacceptable" spending on maintenance, fined train companies for the poor service provided by the telephone enquiry bureau and highlighted the mis-selling of train tickets.

JY/hi/wd



6 Prescott may have been known affectionately as 'thumper' by his friends, but he denies that he hit Hayes



6 What Hayes describes as a punch in the stomach might seem to Prescott just a jab, but he says it was a punch

## Prescott may sue over claims he hit Tory

By Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

IT could be seconds out today for a libel action pitching John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, in the red corner, against the diminutive former Tory MP, Jerry Hayes, in the blue corner.

Mr Prescott may affectionately have been called "thumper" by his friends in the 1980s, but he is threatening to sue Mr Hayes for claiming he hit the Tory MP who Labour was in opposition.

Mr Prescott's solicitors have warned that unless an apology is forthcoming, a writ would be issued for the allegation by Mr Hayes, now a political gossip columnist for Mohamed Al Fayed's *Punch* magazine.

The Deputy Prime Minister strongly denies hitting Mr Hayes in the stomach playfully or otherwise in the members' lobby of the House of Commons after Mr Hayes claimed he gave them a carpeting.

"It's just not true so he will be seeking an apology," said one

of Mr Prescott's friends. "He is certainly not ruling out the question of suing."

Mr Prescott, who learned to handle himself when he was in the Merchant Navy, recently demonstrated his self-control at the Brit awards when a member of the pop group Chumbawumba sought to gain publicity by throwing a bucket of water over him.

He was not in a forgiving mood following the incident. He later summoned the organisers of the awards to his office to give them a carpeting.

Mr Prescott could be the first member of Tony Blair's Cabinet to go to court if he decides to sue over the allegations made by Mr Hayes. The editor of *Punch*, James Steen, said the magazine was not publishing an apology, but was carrying four pages on its legal fictions with Mr Prescott, with a front page photo-montage of the Deputy Prime Minister wearing a judge's wig.

Mr Steen said Mr Prescott's solicitors, Davenport Lyons, had sent a letter a week ago, "What they want is an apology published in the magazine, a statement in open court publicly retracting the allegations and an undertaking we won't republish the defamatory.

"We are expecting a writ tomorrow. We are not going to apologise. I have spoken to Jerry Hayes about this. Jerry Hayes is half the size of John Prescott. What he describes as a punch in the stomach might seem to John Prescott just a jab, but he says it was a punch."

After the dousing by Daniel Nohacon, Mr Prescott complained at the weekend that it seemed to be "open season" against him after reports alleging that he had failed to declare £27,000 from the Joseph Rowntree Trust.

Sir Norman Fowler, Mr Prescott's Tory shadow, last night pursued the allegation by calling for an investigation in a letter to Sir Gordon Downey, the parliamentary commissioner for standards.

A spokesman for the trust

said yesterday that Mr Prescott had approached the trust to fund a programme of research by Bruce Millan, the former Eu-

ropean Commissioner for the regions, into regional policy.

Mr Prescott's aides yesterday explained the circumstances to Sir Gordon's office. Mr Prescott declared the first instalment of the donation from the trust in the register of members' interests but under Sir Gordon's guidance set up a fund to handle a second payment which he did not declare because it was not paid to him.

Mr Straw, Home Secretary, recorded a grant of between £10-£15,000 towards research on constitutional policy from the trust when Labour was in opposition.

## Cabinet split over poll system reform

THE CABINET is still split over pressure from the Liberal Democrats to replace the first past the post voting system with proportional representation before the next election, writes Colin Brown.

Jack Straw yesterday signalled he would support a change to an alternative vote system, but the Liberal Democrats protested that did not count as PR. And sources close to the Home Secretary said he would not support a compromise, known as AV-plus, in which a proportion of MPs would be elected through a PR system.

"He quite passionately supports the link between MPs and their constituencies and he would not want to see that broken. AV-plus would do that," said one.

John Prescott, the Deputy

Prime Minister, is also reluctant to support PR. The Prime Minister has said he is not persuaded by the campaign for PR but has set up a committee chaired by Lord Jenkins, former leader of the SDP, which is due to report on possible reform to the voting system by the end of the year.

Mr Straw said yesterday that a referendum would be held before the election on a new system, but there was no commitment to implement the conclusions of the Jenkins commission for the next poll.

Rohin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, and Jack Cunningham, the agriculture minister, are known to support PR but Mr Straw and other opponents in the Cabinet are still as deeply entrenched as ever, and reports of a shift within the Cabinet are being dismissed.

## 'Legoland' building for MPs goes on apace around the country

By Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

More than £90m has been spent on a "Legoland" office block being pieced together for MPs at Westminster.

Construction of the £250m bronze and sandstone offices started in January, on the site opposite Big Ben where London Underground has been laying the new Jubilee Line.

But while the Parliamentary Works Directorate has been waiting for London Underground to complete and clear the site, a lot of the work on the new Commons office building has been going on around the country.

A project spokesman told *The Independent* that it had been decided to prefabricate as much of the new building as

possible, with work already substantially completed on sandstone columns from Derbyshire, granite plinths and walling, precast concrete floors, columns and arches. "All the flooring units come ready-made, and they'll slot on top of the columns; that's where talk of the Legoland kit comes in," the spokesman said.

"The columns are individual stones, but they come ready-made in storey-high units with a big metal bar through the middle of them, and a bolt at each end to turn it together.

"The on-site job is really just putting it all together and bolting it up, and making sure it's wind and weather-proof." When it is completed, the new building will provide individual offices for more than 200 MPs and their staff, with six select-

committee rooms - one equipped for simultaneous translation - eight conference rooms, exhibition space, restaurants and canteens, facilities, a post office and a "necessities shop". Already called Portcullis House, after the Westminster insignia, it is expected to be ready for occupation from the beginning of 2001. Sir Sydney Chapman, Conservative chairman of the all-party Commons Accommodation and Works Committee, has said that Michael Hopkins and Partners, the architects, had been commissioned "to produce a building designed for a life of 200 years or more, using materials of high quality, including natural stone, bronze and English oak, as befits a site of international importance."

But while the building is being built to last, with roofing and windows made of aluminium and bronze, *The Independent* has been told that there is no question of furnishing it with the kind of luxurious fittings that have been commissioned in the existing Palace of Westminster.

The new building will contain none of the hand-printed wallpaper, or luxury furnishings, which provoked the recent row over the £650,000 redecoration of the Lord Chancellor's apartments.

"There will be no wallpaper at all in the building," one source said, "so we can scotch that one; there will be no hand-printed wallpaper."

The building will also be carpeted with carpet-tiles, rather than the hand-made, Pugin-design carpeting used in the

main parliamentary building. "We will be going to the manufacturers for a standard product," the project spokesman said. "It will be a plain background with a black spot on it, and the office furniture will be bought off the market. What the House decided was that we had to build a building which was not to the standards of the speculative office developer, knowing it was going to be pulled down in 30 years' time. We are building on the presumption that Parliament lasts for ever."

The £250m budget makes allowance for forecast construction price inflation up to the year 2000, and includes the purchase of the site, all fees and expenses, furnishing and fitting out costs, including value-added tax.

## Landmine charity to get Army vehicles

By Anthony Bevins

THE Halo Trust is to be given 10 heavy-duty vehicles by the Government, to help with its mine-clearance programme, George Robertson, the Secretary of State for Defence, told the Commons yesterday.

An MoD spokeswoman said later that the trust, which was given high-profile support by Diana, Princess of Wales, had asked for help with equipment. The vehicles had been used by the Army in Bosnia.

Mr Robertson told MPs that the surplus equipment - "Volvo medium-wheel tractors" - were worth about £125,000 and would "considerably increase the rate of mine-clearance and the safety of operators".

He said that the Government would soon be destroying about a million anti-personnel landmines, retaining only a small number for mine-clearance and training purposes.

Since it took office, the Government has also doubled its humanitarian de-mining programme budget to £10m - available to non-government organisations, and others, for mine-clearance projects.

The Halo Trust, which will use the "tractors" in northern Afghanistan, and Angola, also operates in Cambodia, Mozambique and Chechnya.

Mr Robertson said: "I am extremely proud that this government has led the way in the campaign against anti-personnel landmines. These weapons are a blight on the face of the earth, and the sooner they are outlawed forever, the safer our world will be."

The minister also said that the Government had set up a mine information and training centre, and he added: "We will continue to use the expertise of the British Army, which is formidable, to make sure that they are able to help not only other military agencies but the civil and humanitarian charitable community with the work that they are doing, to deal with a weapons system that has damaged and killed so many millions of people."

# Canon personal copiers

## New Deal scheme to get lone parents back to work goes nationwide

By Diana Coyle  
Economics Editor

THE Government said yesterday that it had already earmarked almost £500m to help lone parents return to work. Next week's Budget is expected to provide an additional £1bn in help for all low-paid families.

The New Deal for single parents will next month be extended, earlier than first planned, from eight pilot schemes to all those across the country making a new claim for income support. From October, it will apply to all those whose youngest child is over five.

There will be an additional £6m from April and £25m from October, which will eventually pay for about 1,330 more personal advisers on top of the 80 involved in pilot schemes. The expansion will take government spending on this element of its New Deal to £151m, on top of £200m extra for childcare.

Harriet Harman, the Secretary of State for Social Services, told a conference in London that the Government was de-

lighted with the success of the pilot schemes, which had seen 1,200 parents move off benefit. "It is inconceivable that we could go back to what we had before," she said.

While there was huge enthusiasm for the new scheme among the advisers attending the conference, childcare was only one of the obstacles mentioned. One concern was the new fear among parents that they would lose their entitlement to the higher single par-

ent benefit if a new job did not work out.

Michelle Charlesworth, an adviser in Cambridge, said: "This has become quite commonplace in the past few weeks." The result was less willingness to think about hopping from one job to another, she said.

Robert Humphrey, a colleague working in Cambridgeshire, said the lack of available jobs and transport outside the city were additional problems. But

some women had opted for self-employment or homeworking after their interviews.

The advisers were unanimous that the biggest improvement in their ability to help clients find work was the fact that they could spend more than an hour in an interview. Previously a Benefits Agency or Employment Service interview lasted no more than two or three minutes.

Experts such as Richard Layard, a Labour guru at the London School of Economics, have long emphasised extended interviews and personal attention as an effective way of reducing the number of people claiming benefit.

The personal advisers from the eight pilot schemes said that between one-third and one-half of the women they interviewed were getting job placements. Some involved deals with local employers, such as negotiations with Sainsbury's in north Surrey to try to get shift patterns that suit parents.

A full academic evaluation of the New Deal for lone parents is due to be published in the summer.

# Twelve years for jealous husband in acid attack

By Kim Sengupta

PETER Humphrey was an obsessive, jealous husband who decided to exact a sadistic revenge on his estranged wife by disfiguring her face with nitric acid, a jury decided yesterday. The plot went wrong, and it was 21-year-old babysitter Beverley Hammett who was left scarred for life.

Yesterday the 51-year-old businessman was jailed for 12 years at Exeter Crown Court. As he was being led down to the cells he screamed out: "I would like to make a comment to this jury, I am not guilty". Passing sentence, Judge Graham Colte said: "There has not even been a hint of remorse. You are an evil man."

Mrs Hammett's face has been rebuilt with plastic skin. The operation is the first time the method had been used after a chemical attack. She said she "felt sorry" for her attacker, and that she "could not understand" why he did it.

The man who flung the acid on Mrs Hammett's face when she answered the door of the

house where she worked in the Devon seaside town of Seaton in the summer of 1996 still has not been caught. Police have offered a £10,000 reward.

The intended victim, said the prosecution, was 37-year-old Susan Humphrey, who had split from her husband in 1995 after a nine-year marriage. The main cause, Humphrey claimed, was problems with money.

Humphrey left the marital home, but returned to it on a daily basis and set up listening devices in the house. His wife began divorce proceedings and took out a restraining order under which he had to remove the recording equipment and keep at least 100 yards away from the house.

But Humphrey breached the order almost immediately, and two weeks before the attack Susan Humphrey had attempted to have him jailed. There was also an incident when acid had been poured into the engine of her car.

Humphrey had also assaulted his former wife's new partner, 33-year-old Craig Millwater, throttling him when

he found them together. Humphrey denied that he had tried to ruin his looks and ensure that if he could not have her, then she would not be attractive for anyone else.

On the night of the attack on 10 July 1996, Humphrey had two containers of nitric acid in the boot of his car due to be delivered for business purposes to a company. But when the incident took place he had a "concrete aim" about his whereabouts.

Prosecution lawyer Gavin Chalmers claimed he must have hired someone else to do it.

Giving evidence, Mrs Humphrey described how she got home and saw Ms Hammett's face. She said: "I could not believe the sight I saw. I could not believe someone could do something like this."

Mrs Humphrey was asked while being cross-examined by Mr Gray whether she had anything to do with the acid attack on Ms Hammett. She responded: "I have nothing to do with any throwing of any acid. I would not know anyone who would do such a horrendous act."

## Evangelical school to get state funds

By Judith Judd  
Education Editor

two Muslim schools in Britain. Parents pay fees of £715 a term at the 150-pupil John Loughborough School, one of two secondary and eight primary schools run by the church.

Government sources said ministers were minded to fund the school because it had local support and high standards.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church, which has many members in the Afro-Caribbean community, broke away from the Baptist church in America in the last century.

Keith Davidson, the church's education director, said: "We are absolutely delighted. For three and a half years we have been trying to get state funding just like the Roman Catholics, the Church of England, the

Methodists and the Jews." He said his church was Creationist - it believes that everything that exists had its origin in acts of creation by God.

He said: "We would not accept the Darwinian theory of Creation but that is also true of some other Christian churches."

Robert Ashby, director of the British Humanist Association, said: "We are totally against sectarian education which impedes the development of a more integrated and tolerant society. They are out on a limb compared with most other Christians. Even the Pope has accepted evolution."

"Why should children have their parents' views as the governing factor in their education? It is very sad."



Mighty minimalism: One of the new Vuitton outfits by Marc Jacobs which were revealed in Paris yesterday

First the Vuitton case, now clothes to put in it

By Tamzin Blanchard  
Fashion Editor, in Paris

LOUIS VUITTON gave birth to a new fashion monster yesterday. The French label known for making luxury luggage since 1854 launched its first clothing collection, designed by the American minimalist Marc Jacobs. The clothes - flat-front trousers, long skirts, cashmere T-shirts, and rubberised cotton coats in shades of white, grey, pale blue, and a splash of raspberry - were smart, plain and luxurious, much more understated than the luggage and accessories. But these are the sort of clothes that - given the fame and reputation of the label - will sell like hot cakes. Prada sold its first collection of hot cakes in 1989 on the back of a few nylon handbags. Then, Prada's turnover was stable, but small. By last year it was £730m, purely because the clothing label has made the accessories so desirable.

Louis Vuitton took no chances with Marc Jacobs yesterday. While John Galliano and Alexander McQueen have run riot over the houses of Dior and Givenchy, LVMH, the company which own both those labels as well as Louis Vuitton, chose Marc Jacobs as the designer with credibility. Kate Moss is a good friend, and he will never send an outfit resembling Cousin IT down the runway as McQueen has done at Givenchy couture. Instead, Jacobs was a sure, safe bet.

If you want to make headlines, employ a British designer; if you want assured commercial success, employ an American.

All the Paris luxury houses are on course for an overturn this week. Last night, Hermès, the bastion of French luxury leather-work, was given a facelift by the avant-garde Belgian designer Martin Margiela. Later in the week, Celine, known primarily for handbags, presents a new collection by another American, Michael Kors.



Collared: Variations on a theme in a collection notable for understated luxury  
Photographs: Ben Elwes

## British science needs girls, says minister

By Ben Russell  
Education Correspondent

THOUSANDS of girls must be persuaded to take up science A-levels and degrees if Britain is to overcome serious industrial skills shortages, Joan Ruddock, the minister for women, said yesterday. She said the proportion of girls taking up A-levels in subjects such as chemistry, maths and computing was too low, and

called for action to bring them up to the level of boys.

Ms Ruddock told an audience of 600 schoolgirls that there were widespread skills shortages in science, technology and engineering-based industries. She said: "These skill shortages can probably only be filled if girls get in there and get the education required ... The statistics are very troubling indeed because we are a

technological society and we need to compete in the world."

She said only 21 per cent of girls took A-level physics and 16 per cent computing. "We want girls, not just to have jobs ... but to have real careers in science, engineering and technology. We want to see that women are equal and that means in public life and on public bodies."

She was speaking at a conference at the Guildhall in Lon-

don organised by Gresham College in the City and the Girls Schools Association.

Professor Susan Greenfield, Gresham Professor of Physic at Oxford, who organised the event, said: "To do no science for the wrong reasons is a matter of concern. We wanted to assess what could be done to inform girls about science and not force them to do science but get them to consider it as an option."

## Police round on jailed officers' pensions

POLICE chiefs are trying to claw back thousands of pounds of pension payments due to two officers jailed for corruption, Scotland Yard confirmed yesterday.

Without a special application to the Home Secretary, the men would continue to receive pension payments while in jail.

Former constable Ronald Palumbo, who was based at Stoke Newington in east London, is serving 10 years for

smuggling cannabis worth £2m into Britain. John Donald, a former detective constable with the South East Regional Crime Squad, was fined by the BBC's Panorama programme trying to sell evidence to criminals. He is serving 11 years.

Yesterday a Scotland Yard spokesman confirmed that the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Paul Condon, had asked the Home Secretary to

stop a portion of their pensions. "We have applied to the Home Office to have part of their pensions forfeited," the spokesman said.

The power to cut the pensions applies only in exceptional circumstances, where an officer's behaviour is so bad it could lead to a loss of confidence in the service as a whole", the spokesman said.

A Home Office spokes-

woman said the men could lose up to three-quarters of their pensions - the portion paid for by the taxpayer.

The Police Federation, which represents rank and file officers, backed the move and said it should be done in more cases. Its chairman, Fred Broughton, said: "Evidence suggests that at present chief officers have not been applying these rules."

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# Law reform may allow 'Hillsborough' damages

By Kim Sengupta

THE Government's legal reform advisers yesterday recommended changes to remove obstacles that prevented relatives of the Hillsborough tragedy seeking compensation.

Although the Hillsborough relations would not benefit, the reform would clear the way for future similar actions. It would also mean that the relations of

those killed in road accidents would be able to claim damages.

Many of the relations of those killed or injured in the tragedy nine years ago had sued for the mental illnesses they developed as a result of the trauma. But nearly all failed to get compensation because they had only indirectly heard about the accident – on television or from someone else.

The Law Commission said

the current law was drawn "unnecessarily tightly" and produced "arbitrary results". It suggested dropping the requirement that witnesses to a disaster should be "close in time and space" to the accident, and that they see it at first hand.

The House of Lords had ruled that by the time many relatives arrived at the stadium in Sheffield, they were too late to qualify for damages.

But Professor Andrew Burrows, the report's author, said: "You end up with the law having to decide whether you had come along in a sufficiently near period of time."

To win damages, witnesses would still have to prove a "close tie of love and affection" with the victims.

And they would still have to demonstrate they had developed genuine mental illness.

"The law is not saying you can recover damages just because you are upset. There is a line – and we are saying there should continue to be a line – between a recognised psychiatric illness and mental distress."

The proposals came as Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, reaffirmed his view that there should be no new inquiry into the disaster.

Ninety-six spectators were

killed and more than 400 injured at the stadium when fans were allowed in to stands which were already filled to capacity.

Both relatives of the victims and police officers at the scene sued South Yorkshire Police for damages, claiming it had been negligent in controlling fans entering the stadium.

However, although most of the police officers won large sums, most relatives failed, de-

spite the Lords accepting that their suffering was "no less real and frequently no less painful and disabling" than physical injuries. The Law Commission report homed in on this, saying: "The apparent injustice of this position has been acknowledged by judges, newspapers, MPs and legal commentators."

The Home Office said last night that it would be considering the commission's report.

## Dumb or not? Nations go to war over the Teletubbies

By Rob Brown Media Editor

Nations were split down the middle yesterday, not on whether to bomb Iraq, but on the merits of the *Teletubbies*.

Debate became heated at the second World Summit on Television for Children when a delegate who accused *Tinky Winky, Dipsy, Laa-Laa and Po* of "dumbing down" kids around the globe was shot down in very undiplomatic language.

Ada Haug, head of pre-school programmes with NRK in Norway, was dismissed as an "ignorant slut" by another speaker, Alice Cahn, director of children's programmes with the American public broadcasting service, PBS.

Ms Haug criticised the naked commercialism of the BBC's hit series, whose set, characters and initial storylines are reported to have cost the corporation £5.5m to establish. "Teletubbies is the most market-oriented children's programme I've ever seen."

To the shock of many of the audience in the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster Ms Cahn then called Ms Haug an "ignorant slut". Later it was explained that

this was not as rude as it may have sounded, being a reference to a line from a popular American television programme (although no one in the press gallery was able to establish which show).

Anne Wood, the creator of *Teletubbies*, later welcomed the

life," said the veteran Scandinavian television executive.

She also criticised the constant repetition, the poor plots and the fact that the series had no sense of place. "No wonder the series is proving so popular on the world's commercial channels," she hissed.

Ms Cahn, who acquired the series for PBS, was having none of this. "To suggest that *Teletubbies* signals a dumbing down is ludicrous," she shot back. "It's the most old-fashioned but new-fangled programme for young children I've ever seen."

To the shock of many of the

audience in the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster Ms Cahn then called Ms Haug an "ignorant slut". Later it was explained that

this was not as rude as it may have sounded, being a reference to a line from a popular American television programme (although no one in the press gallery was able to establish which show).

Anne Wood, the creator of

*Teletubbies*, later welcomed the

fact that the public debate

stirred up by the series had now assumed an international dimension. The creative director of Ragdoll productions said: "I know people would like to make a wax image of me and stick pins in it. But children have a right to enjoy themselves."

She argued that programmes for young children were not designed to be an answer for the world's ills. Those aimed at pre-school youngsters should be a mirror of their own lives and a window to the experiences of other children.

She acknowledged that

some delegates might not be able to identify with the green grass of *Tubbyland*, and said she would be honoured to use film footage from abroad.

Research into the effects of the programme on children has shown it was "entirely positive... It helps them to develop

speech and those having difficulties are helped by it".

She was backed up by Roy Thompson, of Children's BBC, who said that the impact of the show had been closely monitored: "When parents get together to talk about the programme they noticed how

effective it had been," he said. "It appears as entertaining, but they are gaining things from it."

That view was challenged by Patricia Edgar, head of the Children's Television Foundation in Australia and organiser of the first world summit on children's television three years

ago, who claimed the series was regressive for children "beyond the babbling stage".

Television executives, along with politicians and other decision-makers at the week-long summit, were invited to watch a screening of *Teletubbies* to make up their own minds.

## EU warned of chaos if duty-free sales end

By Glenda Cooper  
Social Affairs Correspondent

ABOLISHING duty-free sales on ferries and aeroplanes travelling between European countries will result in chaos, according to a study by the Duty Free Confederation.

It warns that customers could be put in the "farical" situation of paying different prices during one ferry journey.

A ban on duty-free sales from 1 July 1999 has been agreed by European Union governments – but the commission is under pressure to reconsider the impact of abolishing the perk on boat and plane journeys. The duty-free business is worth £5bn a year across Europe and as many as 140,000 jobs could be lost.

EU duty-free sales are said to account for more than half worldwide duty-free turnover of nearly £10bn. Sales at EU airports alone are more than a quarter of the world's total.

Under EU rules the excise duty on alcohol and tobacco is charged at the rate which

applies in the country where the purchase is made. But after the abolition of duty-free, things become more complicated.

"In one of the simplest cases – let's say Dover to Calais – you will pay UK excise rates up until the half-way mark and then pay French rates after that," said Vic Moorcroft, P&O group direct tax manager. "When you get into international waters no law applies that requires operators to charge any duty."

The Portsmouth-Bilbao ferry (a journey of 36 hours) spends just under an hour in British waters, 15 minutes in French waters, 15-20 minutes in Spanish waters and the rest in international waters. "It could all come down to where you are in the queue," Mr Moorcroft said. "It's a mess."

One solution mooted would be a similar system to VAT where the rate charged is that in the country of departure. "But we already know what that is costing the UK Exchequer by people rushing over to French hypermarkets," Mr Moorcroft added.

"This would exacerbate it."

The duty-free industry wants the commission to organise a study of the social and economic effects of abolition.

The Conservative MEP James Elles, who also wants a study, is tabling questions to the commission highlighting the "serious concern" about the consequences of abolition. "Some 140,000 jobs – 35,000 of them in the UK – are dependent on duty-free trade," he said. "At a time when the European Union is trying to reduce its unemployment figure of 17.7 million we should not be in the business of unnecessarily destroying jobs."

The EU Financial Services Commissioner, Mario Monti, who originally proposed scrapping duty-free, said there would be no reprieve, and no massive losses of jobs and turnover as predicted by duty-free supporters. "People are used to going shopping while they are travelling, and that will not change," he said. Duty-free was an anomaly in the border-free single European market.



From Dover to Palma, how duty-free compares

ALCOHOL	WATCHES
Gordon's gin 1 litre UK high street: £15.49 Heathrow: £17.95	Swatch "original classic" UK high street: £25 Heathrow: £21.27
Dover – Calais, P&O Stena Line: £9.99	Dover – Calais, P&O Stena Line: £21.20
Britannia Airways: £13.99	Palma Airport Majorca: 5,500 pesetas (£2)
Palma Airport Majorca: 1,900 pesetas (£7.60)	

CIGARETTES	PERFUME
200 Silk Cut UK high street: £12.30 Heathrow: £14.50	Chanel No 5, eau de toilette spray, 50ml UK high street: £36.50 Heathrow: £27.90
Dover – Calais, P&O Stena Line: £15.50	Britannia Airways: £27.99
Britannia Airways: £13.99	Palma Airport Majorca: 6,700 pesetas (£26.80)
Palma Airport Majorca: 3,600 pesetas (£4.40)	

## 'Coronation Street' star William Roache sues over libel bill



THE *Coronation Street* star William Roache is suing a law firm for negligence over its handling of his libel action against the *Sun* in 1992. Mr Roache, who plays Ken Barlow, won his action over a claim in November 1990 that he was as boring as his screen character and hated by his television colleagues.

He is suing the London firm Peter Carter-Ruck & Partners after paying both sides' costs when the jury awarded him £50,000 – an amount the *Sun* had paid into court in an attempt to settle the claim and avert a trial. Costs swallowed the £50,000 he won and left him a six-figure bill as well.

Nigel Tait, a partner in the firm, said: "He is alleging he wasn't given the right advice about payments into court. After the trial he was awarded his costs by the judge and wrote a very appreciative letter to Mr Carter-Ruck thanking him for all he had done. But the Court of Appeal interfered over the judge's order on costs. This is highly unusual but over the

years the Court of Appeal has been moving steadily to reduce payments on libel."

The new case, scheduled for June, will draw attention to payment into court, used to encourage an out-of-court settlement. A plaintiff can accept the money or carry on to trial to win more. But if the eventual award is the same or less, the plaintiff must pay both sides' costs from the date of the payment into court, including for the trial.

Had Mr Roache been awarded £50,000, the paper

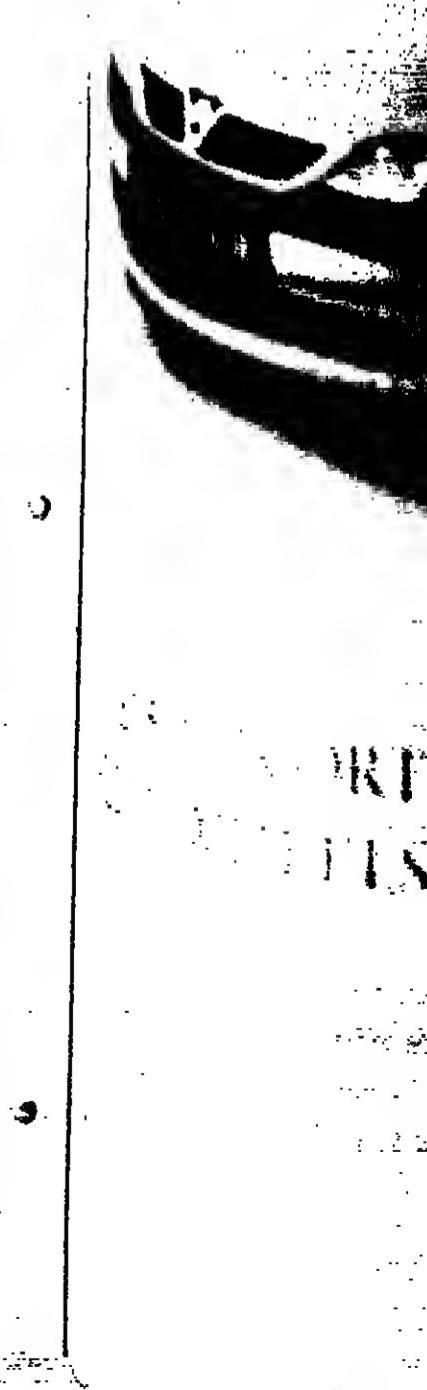
would have had to pay his costs and its own. The *Sun* said in a statement at the time: "Mr Roache has learned the first lesson of libel, which is that you don't like losing, don't play the game. He could have had £50,000 and a full apology..."

Mr Roache, 65, looked likely to escape the costs at first when a High Court judge ruled that he was justified in pressing on to trial to seek an injunction banning the *Sun* from repeating the libel. But the Court of Appeal disagreed, saying he could have had an undertaking not to repeat the libel had he accepted the settlement.

Lord Justice Stuart-Smith said a pre-trial payment into court was "a most useful weapon in the hands of a defendant faced with a greedy plaintiff who is making unreasonable demands for damages". The then Master of the Rolls, Sir Thomas Bingham, said Mr Roache had gone ahead "because he wanted to win a larger sum from the jury than the defendants had offered".

## Antler case prize

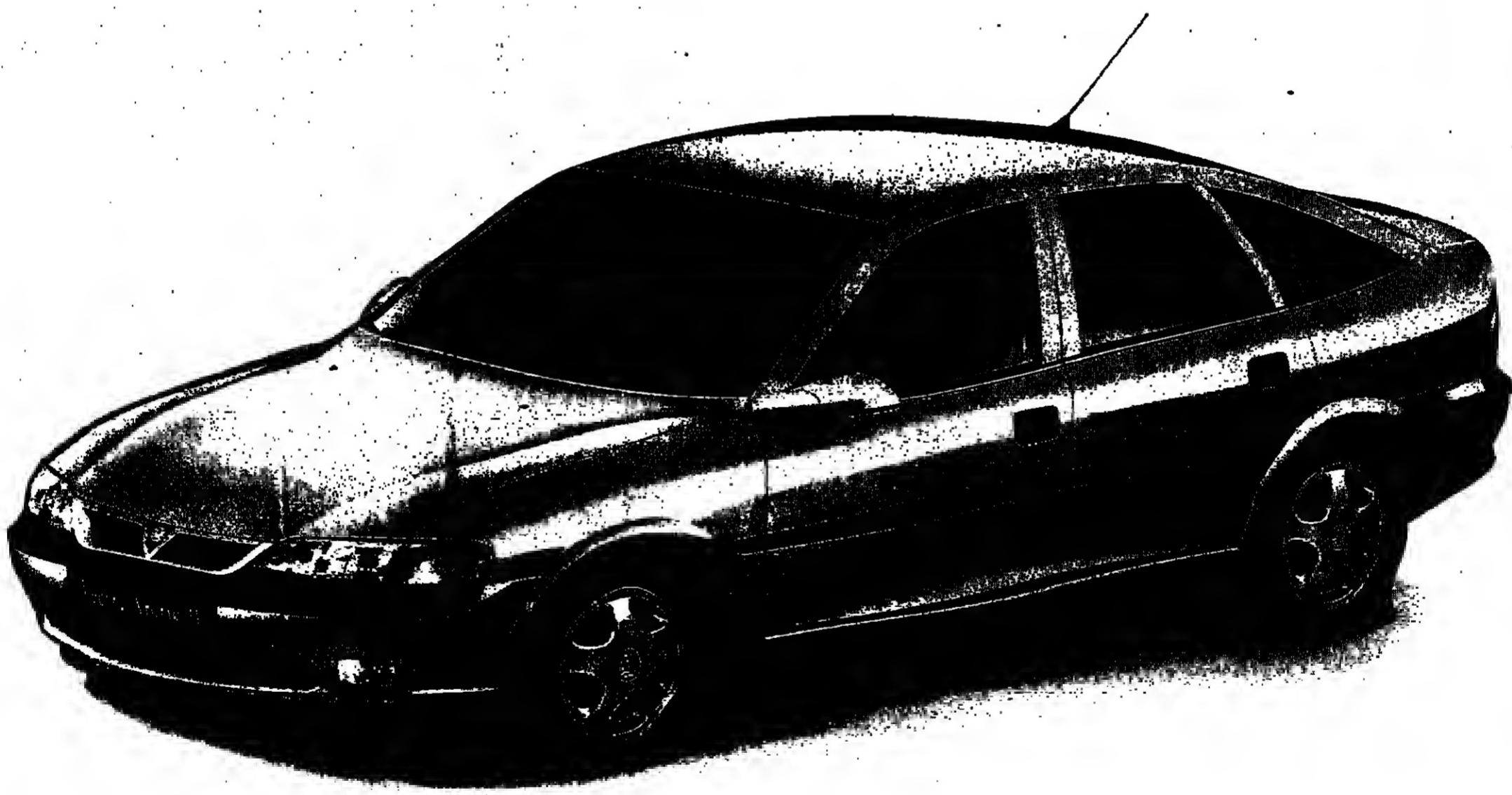
ENTRIES for our competition in the Time Off section to win an Antler suitcase have been overwhelming. The five winners – carefully designed so that you can carry them on to the plane – have already been selected. The entries are now closed. Names and addresses of the winners can be supplied on request.



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The star: Astronomer Patrick Moore inspecting his cake at his 75th birthday party at the Hilton hotel in London yesterday

Photograph: Rui Xavier

## Foster boy's sex victims face a fight for cash

A COUNCIL which placed a teenage sex abuser with a foster family yesterday launched a legal battle to stop four children claiming damages for negligence against the authority.

At the start of a test case in the Court of Appeal in London, three judges heard that it revealed "a terrible story" bound to evoke sympathy for the foster family.

Essex County Council and a social worker are appealing against the decision last July of a High Court judge, Mr Justice Hooper, refusing to strike out claims made by the four children. They were sexually abused by a 15-year-old boy fostered with their family for a month.

Lord Justice Stuart-Smith,

were said to have suffered psychiatric illnesses as a result of what he did to them and the parents were said to have suffered from post-traumatic stress on discovering the nature and extent of G's activities.

Mr Levy said Essex County Council, in its written argument to the court, stated that on any view the case "reveals a terrible story, bound to evoke sympathy for all the W family".

The parents had applied to Essex in about November 1991 to become full-time adolescent foster carers.

They claimed that when they asked about the 15-year-old they were told only that the boy could be a bully and a liar and that his father, a convicted paedophile, had abused him.

The parents say that they known the boy had gone into care at the age of 12 after abusing his sister they would not have taken him into their home.

Mr Levy claimed that Essex was seeking "blanket immunity". The council contends that the children have "an cause of action" against it.

The hearing continues.

### DAILY POEM

#### O Sinner Man

(transcribed by Christine Rutledge for The Carolina Singers)

O sinner man, O sinner man,

O sinner, O which way are you going?

O come back sinner, and don't go there,

Which way are you going?

For hell is deep and dark, despair,

O which way are you going?

O sinner man, O sinner man,

O sinner, O which way are you going?

Though days be dark and night be long

Which way are you going?

We'll shout and sing till we get home;

O which way are you going?

Twas just about the break of day,

Which way are you going?

My sin forgiven and my soul set free,

O which way are you going?

Shortly after the American Civil War a group of former slaves toured the northern states as The Carolina Singers, raising money for black schools. Their leader, Caroline Rutledge, published the traditional songs they sang in 1873, in a pamphlet entitled *Spirituelles*. This was the first appearance in print of many of the best-loved lyrics in the English language, such as "Go Down, Moses", "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "Steal Away". A selection appears in *Nineteenth-Century American Women Poets: an anthology*, edited by Paula Bernat Bennett (Blackwell, £15.99).

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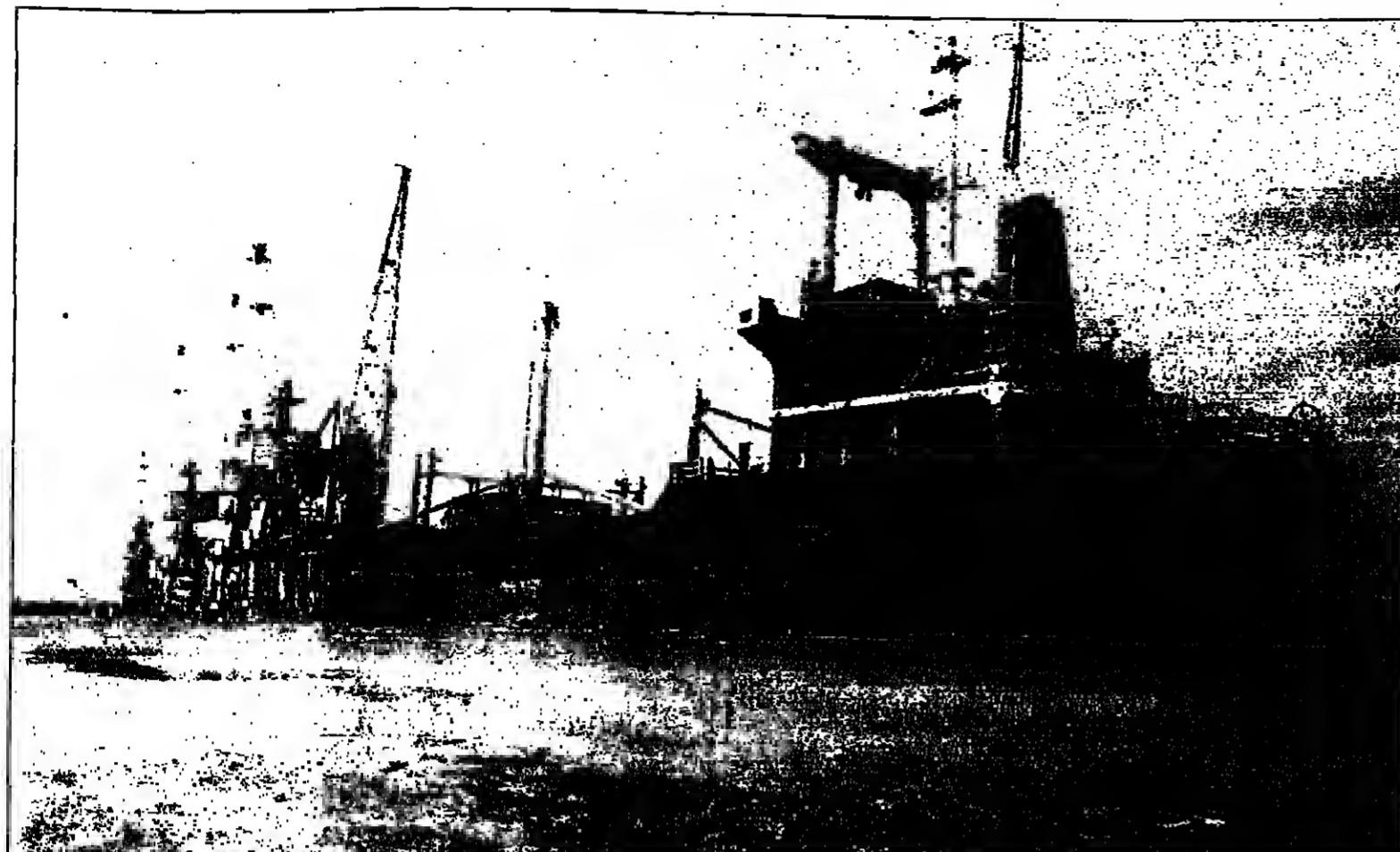
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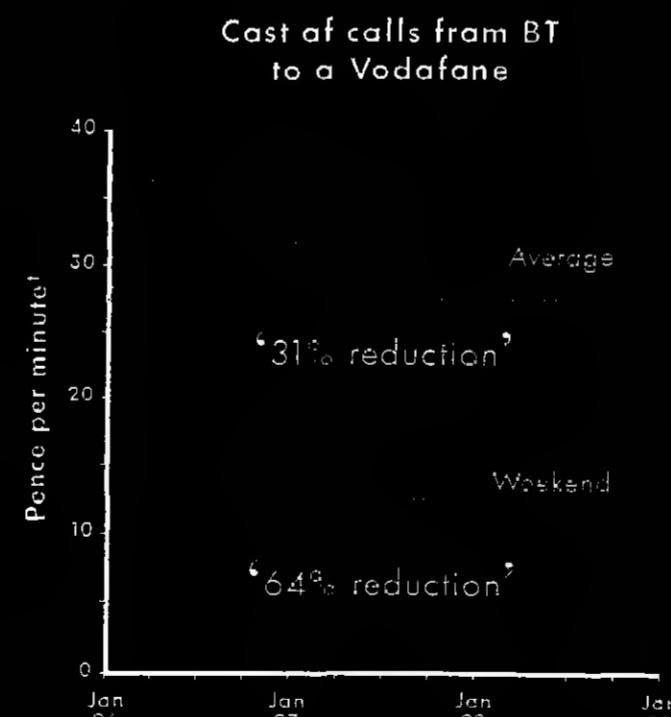
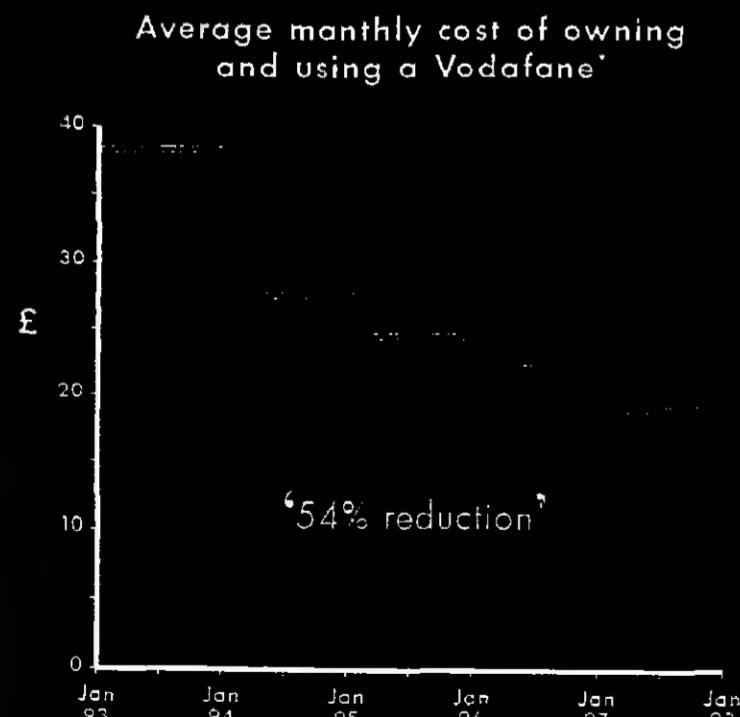
دعا من الارجل





The big sleep: A dog lies asleep below the tanker Wisteria, which was hit by an Iranian missile in 1981 and lies rotting in Basra. Photograph: Robert Fisk

# Vodafone's falling call costs. A graphic demonstration.



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†Upper line refers to average retail price/min across the week, including VAT; 66% daytime, 21% evening and 13% weekends. Lower line refers to weekend only retail price/min, including VAT.

## Rotting hulks bear witness to wasting of Iraq

Robert Fisk visits the once-bustling port of Basra, crippled by sanctions

"FIVE Englishmen ran this port until 1958," Ali al-Imara proudly announces. "The first chairman was John Ward, from 1919 until 1942, and then we had William Bennett until 1947. They were very good men."

"In 1958 Mr Shaaui took over; he was a very good man too." There is no mention of the 1958 Iraqi revolution that ended British stewardship of Basra's old harbour.

Today the gates to the wharf are still adorned with well-polished Tudor roses in heavy brass, but the statues have cascaded off the roofs of the old colonial offices. The railway lines, laid down when Basra was

an international rail terminal, are corroded with weeds.

The great soughish waterway of the Shatt al-Arab drifts past the hulks tied up on the quays. Here is the *Yasmine*, a trawler under whose black paint it is still possible to read the words "Lord Shackleton, Port Stanley, FI (Falkland Islands)", and there the *Wisteria*, all 6,742-blackened tons of her.

Who set fire to her, I ask three Iraqi officials on the quay? "An Iranian missile hit it in 1981," one of them replies. But his friend mutters in Arabic: "Tell him it was the Americans." Then they all chorus: "It was the Americans!"

Basra lives on lies. If only the Iranians hadn't attacked Iraq and closed the river in 1980 (it was the Iraqis who invaded Iran). If only the UN had not slapped sanctions on Iraq after the Iran-Iraq war (forget the little matter of Kuwait in 1990). Even the ships have changed their names in embarrassment.

The supply ship *Aico Sarn*, according to a half-erased name, used to be the *Pacific Prospector* of Illinois and, before that, the *Northern Builder*.

Behind us, the marshalling yards are filled with long freight trains, massive grey wagons hooked up to leave on a journey that should have started in 1980, the trucks now entangled with weeds and bushes. Mr al-Imara strides along the docks. "If it wasn't for sanctions, we would have this port dredged and running," he says.

It is an odd affliction that now besets Iraq's bureaucracy. Tilted to boast of all that is best about Iraq, they now have to publicise all that is worst. It must be an awfully difficult transition. For who knows when the orders might come down from Baghdad to reverse the process yet again? Mr al-Imara says he is a poet as well as being "foreign relations adviser" to Basra port. And he quotes a work of his called *Confrontation*:

"When you shoot with a bullet from anywhere,

The bullet will head straight for my chest:

Because the events through which we have passed

Have made my chest round."

And we look at Mr al-Imara's rather diminutive chest and laugh politely. Whose bullets, we wonder silently, is the poet referring to? Surely not those which scar the facade of Basra's central police station, still a gutted marble shell beside one of the city's fetid canals. Certainly not those which smashed into the burning governorate building during the same 1991 uprising by Basra's Shi'ite Muslim majority. And not the bullets which were fired into the city's police cars. On the grainy old television in our hotel room, President Saddam Hussein is seated before his Revolutionary Command Council, making a joke at which his uniformed couriers guffaw.

The Corniche of Martyrs corrects any misapprehensions about the enemy. For along the west bank of the Shatt al-Arab, below the dark portals of the Basra Sheraton hotel, stand the dead heroes of President Saddam's "Quada'iyeh" war, the chosen two dozen Iraqi soldiers - out of perhaps half a million - whose death will not have been in vain. Each man, modelled from photographs, points across the muddy waterway towards the precise location on the war front, inside Iran, at which he died during a war which President Saddam named after Iraq's ancient victory over the Persians.

The soldiers, three times life-size, are identified by name, along with a colossus down the bank representing General Adnan Khairallah, one of the greatest of all Saddam's military leaders. He stands facing his canon-fodder, right arm raised in honour of their courage; though we must spare a thought for the enormously popular general, who died "tragically" in a helicopter crash not long after the war ended. Below these statues, the street urchins hawk nuts parcelled in old newspaper at eight pence a package.

They are as far as they can get from the food chain, at the furthest corner of Iraq, clamped between Iran's suspicions to the east and Kuwait's hatred to the south, dominated by rusting ships and the towering dead. What would Mr Ward and Mr Bennett make of all this?

## Money pours in for child war victims

By Amanda Kelly

A WEEK has gone by since Robert Fisk began his reports on the plight of Iraq's children and *The Independent's* appeal has already raised nearly £10,000. The money is going to help children struck down by leukaemia because of weapons used during the Gulf War. Many are dying because of a lack of medicines and it is towards importing these cancer-treating drugs that our donations will go.

Officials of the UN sanctions committee and the British government have said authorisation for medicines of this kind could be issued with minimum delay. Every application for export of medicines must be separately approved by the Department of Health, the Foreign Office and the Department of Trade and Industry.

We have called on Care International and Medical Aid for Iraqi Children to help oversee their procurement and delivery from start to finish. Both groups are already working in Iraq.

Care International's Lockton Morrissey, who is based in Iraq, explained the path our consignment will take once it is shipped into Jordan. "The goods will come into Aquaba port where they will be tested by the ministry of health to make sure they are what we say they are. Because of the no-fly restrictions on Iraq we



then have to transport the drugs by road, in refrigerated trucks.

"When a delivery gets to the Iraqi border we have to present documentation to show that it is authorised under the sanctions. After further checks in Iraq, it will carry on to the ministry of health in Baghdad and be checked again. It will then be released to us to distribute."

The drugs will be administered by well-qualified doctors to those who need them. Professor Saad Tabqchi, medical director of Medical Aid, said: "The capability of the Iraqi doctors is not in question. Most of them have been trained in Britain and are very highly qualified. But sanctions have left them in the impossible position of having nothing to treat their patients with."

The help of *Independent* readers will allow these doctors to save lives that would otherwise be lost.

Please send cheques, made out to The Independent Iraq Appeal, to PO Box No 6870, 1 Canada Square, London, E14 5BT.

لهم من الراحل

# Army on alert for Suharto's re-election

By Richard Lloyd Parry  
in Jakarta

PRESIDENT Suharto will be re-elected today as Indonesia's unchallenged leader for a seventh consecutive term, against a backdrop of student protests and economic confusion.

There were protests in at least three cities in the central island of Java yesterday, although those in the capital,

Jakarta, ended peacefully and were confined to the university campus.

The stand-off between the government and the International Monetary Fund over the IMF's proposed rescue package for Indonesia's economy generated another choppy day on the currency exchanges. However, the Indonesian rupiah strengthened by the end of trading despite an earlier drop.

Hundreds of students at the University of Indonesia and at the Catholic Atmajaya University in Jakarta protested against Suharto's imminent re-election. Thousands of police and army reinforcements have been brought in to patrol the centre of Jakarta, and in the city of Yogyakarta in Java, six students were reported to have been arrested on Sunday after leading a street demonstra-

tion. In an interview with an Indonesian magazine, the chief of the armed forces warned that uncontrolled protests could lead to the collapse of the country.

"What is clear [is] that I do not want this nation to break up because of the acts of irresponsible people," said General Wiranto. "If it is allowed to go in the direction they want, the situation

will become very dangerous."

The rupiah closed in Jakarta at 10,800/11,100 to the US dollar, after losing 11 per cent of its value in the morning. The financial turmoil followed suggestions by President Suharto that his government may abandon the IMF's \$43bn (£27bn) rescue programme for Indonesia. The president is angry over the IMF's decision to delay next week's instalment of

\$3bn. Indonesia's foreign minister, Ali Alatas, later denied that the government intended to abandon the plan, but another senior politician was quoted in the *Indonesian Observer* as warning that any IMF attempt to "humiliate" the country will be rejected.

This morning's expected announcement by the People's Consultative Assembly (MPA) of the re-election of President

Suharto follows 10 days of realistic deliberations from which dissent was scrupulously filtered out.

Of the 1,000 assembly members, 400 are appointed directly by President Suharto. Most of the remaining 600 are members of his Golkar Party. Even members of Indonesia's so-called opposition must be approved by the government, which has used its powers to ex-

clude anyone who might offer a challenge to the president. Suharto, together with his chosen vice-president, the former technology minister, BJ Habibie, are the only candidates. To eliminate any possibility of dissent, the ruling party has warned members of the assembly that "interruptions" to the re-election ceremony will not be tolerated.

Battle looms, page 18

## Four years on, and black still rarely meets white

**JO'BURG DIARY**



Mary Braid

THE sound of a saxophone drifts sedately down 7th Street heralding another Saturday night's jazz at the chic Bass Line club in Melville, one of Johannesburg's white suburbs.

At the rather garish Red Barrel near by, hundreds of teenagers - almost all white - are giving their all to the karaoke machine. But the candlelit Bass Line, as any humble jazz fan will tell you, attracts a more discerning crowd. The club also boasts a rare Johannesburg phenomenon: a genuine, real McCoy, racially mixed crowd.

When I say mixed, there are qualifications. There are blacks and whites in the same room but not often at the same tables. It is rather like those Venn diagrams in school maths where the circles never intersect because they have nothing in common.

Still, it is a remarkable sight in a city where most people only meet "the other" at work. After hours, they generally head back to the old apartheid-era territories: blacks wait in long queues to be ushered into minibus bound for outlying townships while whites drive home to the plush northern suburbs. The most terrible shame is that Johannesburg city centre - considered by everyone as dangerous after dark - provides no neutral ground for socialising.

The enduring divisions are a source of deep frustration to outsiders. They rob life in South Africa of a great deal of its richness, for foreigners are not exempt from the racial pigeonholing. In the quest for common ground it rarely helps to play up Scottishness, femaleness or your upbringing on the council estate. Apartheid has obliterated interest in any form of discrimination or disadvantage other than that based on race. "You're just another rich white South African to me," was the way one black official bluntly put it.

Imagine, then, the sheer relief of the Base Line. The concern is that four years after democratic elections there are still so few places like it.

If music can act as a social glue, sport, too, retains a little of its adhesive potential, although nothing like the power invested in it in those early heady days of the new democracy. White South Africans still speak about black preference for soccer and white for rugby as if it were in the genes; and they use the dichotomy to explain the continuing divisions among pupils in some schools.

But at the local Holiday Inn last weekend South Africa's game with Egypt in the final of the African Nations Cup brought blacks and whites together. There was a touch of the old Venn diagram about the seating arrangements in the bar but never mind: there was a whiff of togetherness.

Trouble after the match was forecast. The cops were a little nervous after the New Year celebrations in run-down inner-city Hillbrow, where residents welcomed in 1998 by throwing refrigerators from sixth-floor windows. But despite the 2-0 defeat there was no trouble. Instead thousands of fans - black and white - went to the airport to welcome the boys back with Jetho Sono, the caretaker coach, who

spiced up proceedings by revealing he had left the team for two days during the Burkina Faso tournament to return home to consult a witchdoctor and his ancestors about the team's chances.

It is hard to say whether that affected his popularity but the debate about whether Sono should stay on as coach has raged all week. Blacks inundated radio chat shows normally dominated by white callers; soccer has generated a rare burst of public cohesion.

But sport's limitations as national healer became clear yesterday when bitterness over the continuing "whiteness" of South African rugby came to the Pretoria High Court. President Nelson Mandela took the advice of his lawyers and delayed his appearance in court, where he was to face questions about an official investigation into racism in rugby. The South African Rugby Football Union (Sarfu), which brought the case, is refusing to co-operate with the government inquiry into its finances and management.

It is far from the euphoric day when President Mandela donned the Springbok jersey, the detested symbol of white domination, in the spirit of reconciliation. Since then relations between the government and Louis Luyt, Sarfu's president, have degenerated dramatically. Sports minister Steve Tshwete says that while enemies to reform lurk everywhere, nowhere are they more entrenched than at Sarfu's headquarters.

Rugby is accused of doing nothing to encourage black talent or to darken the collective complexion of the national team. Cricket has come in for similar criticisms. A year away from the second national elections many South Africans are growing tired of the slow pace of social change.



Dancing queen: Cheryl Carolus, the new High Commissioner in London

Photograph: Popperfoto

Britain has been warned.

## Jordan and Israel repair Mossad row

By Patrick Cockburn



Ariel Sharon:  
"The problem has gone"

ISRAEL and Jordan are mending fences six months after Mossad, the Israeli foreign intelligence agency, infuriated King Hussein by trying to kill an official of a militant Islamic organisation in the streets of Amman, the Jordanian capital.

Ariel Sharon, the Israeli infrastructure minister, had talks about greater co-operation with King Hussein in Jordan over the weekend and Crown Prince Hassan will see Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, in Israel today. After his meeting General Sharon said: "The problem has gone."

Jordan feels squeezed between a resurgent Iraq to the east and, to the west, Mr Netanyahu who does not want to implement the Oslo accords with the Palestinians. It has gained few benefits from the peace treaty signed with Israel in 1994. But King Hussein also broke publicly with Iraq in 1995 when he received Gener-

water, helping to prevent any conflict over scarce water supplies and save the Dead Sea from gradual evaporation at current rates of inflow.

Relations between Jordan and Israel deteriorated after the election of Mr Netanyahu in 1996. King Hussein expressed deep distrust for the Israeli premier and has formed a better personal understanding with General Sharon.

Relations plummeted when Mossad tried to kill Khalid Meshal, a member of the Islamic militant organisation, with poison gas last September. The Mossad agents were captured and exchanged for the jailed Hamas leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin.

In the aftermath of the affair, King Hussein reportedly insisted that Israel sack Danny Yatom, the head of Mossad, before ties could improve. He was replaced last week by Efraim Halevi, a former Mossad deputy chief who was involved with the negotiation of a peace treaty with Jordan in 1994.

Egypt, the only other Arab state to sign a peace treaty with Israel, continues to have frosty relations with Mr Netanyahu.

In an interview, President Hosni Mubarak accuses him of turning the world upside down and failing to keep his promises on Middle East peace. He told the Israeli daily *Maariv*: "I have met with him several times and up until today all I got from him were promises. Nothing was carried out."

## Ailing King Fahd of Saudi Arabia faces surgery

Saudi Arabia's King Fahd is seriously ill and might have to undergo surgery after being hospitalised in Riyadh with a gall-bladder infection. An American medical team was monitoring the condition of King Fahd, who is in his mid-70s, and was preparing to remove his gall bladder if necessary, said officials. The King Fahd Specialist Hospital in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, stopped all visits and calls and barred relatives and family members from seeing the monarch. His health has been the source of much speculation since he suffered a stroke in November 1995.

— AP, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

## Ex-Miss USA loses sex suit

A suit by a former Miss USA against Prince Jefri of Brunei, claiming she was unknowingly recruited for a Middle Eastern sex tour, was dismissed by a Los Angeles judge. Judge Consuelo Marshall found Shannon Marketic, of Malibu, had failed to meet the necessary burden of proof and held Prince Jefri entitled to immunity under the Foreign Sovereign Immunity Act. Ms Marketic sued Prince Jefri, his brother, the Sultan of Brunei, and the "talent agency" that allegedly recruited her for "promotional" work in Brunei. She said she had to dance nightly and was subjected to sexual advances.

— Tim Cornwell, Los Angeles

## Mayoress guilty of race hate

A French appeal court upheld a three-month suspended sentence on a far-right politician who made racist, anti-immigrant remarks. Catherine Megret, National Front mayoress of Vitrolles, appealed after a lower court sentenced her in September and fined her 50,000 francs (£5,000). Yesterday's ruling said Megret was guilty of "inciting racial discrimination."

— AP, Ax-en-Provence

## School killing shocks Japan

A 13-year-old Japanese boy stabbed a classmate to death yesterday, further shocking a nation rocked by a wave of teenage crime. The boy, at a school near Tokyo, stabbed a similar-aged pupil in the chest during a break between classes. They had quarrelled over a practical joke played on the killer by the victim, police said. The Chief Cabinet Secretary, Kaneko Murakami, used the killing to appeal for a joint effort by the government, schools, parents and local communities to deter youth crime.

— Reuters, Tokyo

## Clinton profits from death of key witness

By Mary Dejevsky  
in Washington

THE criminal investigation into President and Mrs Clinton that began with the Whitewater land deal in Arkansas and expanded to include Mr Clinton's alleged relationship with Monica Lewinsky could turn in favour of the Clintons after the death of a key prosecution witness, James McDougal.

Mr McDougal, who was 57, died of a heart attack in a Texas prison hospital on Sunday after serving a three-year sentence for fraud. An Arkansas businessman, he was the architect of the money-losing Whitewater deal in which the Clintons had invested while Mr Clinton was governor of Arkansas.

Following his conviction two years ago, he had been cooperating with the inquiry launched by the independent prosecutor, Kenneth Starr, into allegations that Mr Clinton used his position as state governor to obtain an illegal loan.

A long-time friend and political ally of Mr Clinton's, Mr McDougal made headlines last year when he explained his decision to co-operate with the Whitewater inquiry by saying: "I just got sick and tired of lying for the fellow [Clinton]."

The four-year-old Whitewater inquiry is not complete and Mr McDougal's death deprives Mr Starr of an important witness. Yesterday Mr Starr was with advisers, trying to assess how far his inquiry might be damaged. Last week there

Jordan, a well-connected Washington businessman and Mr Clinton's golfing partner.

The question is whether Mr Jordan, who admits using his influence to help both a disgraced ex-Whitewater player and Ms Lewinsky to obtain private-sector jobs, was doing them a personal favour, or whether he was acting at Mr Clinton's behest to silence potentially awkward witnesses. Were the Whitewater investigation to collapse, the much-criticised Mr Starr's right to investigate the Lewinsky case could be challenged.

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## Lord Donaldson of Kingsbridge

MINISTER of Arts in the Wilson and Callaghan governments, Jack Donaldson was one of their many, albeit unsung, successes. No man alive is in a better position to pass judgement than Sir Claus Moser, who said yesterday:

Jack was a passionate lover of the arts, especially music, especially opera. When he had a chance to do something to support them, he translated his passion into practical action with effective enthusiasm as well as enjoyment. He was a wonderful colleague.

As one of the members of the Parliamentary Labour Party Arts Coup in the 1970s I can record a first hand that when my Commons colleagues and I made an appointment with Donaldson in his office to discuss issues of concern, we came away with the unanimous feeling that the minister was really listening, more than politely, to the points we were making; and that really cared about the arts for which he was responsible.

It cannot be said of all ministers in all governments that they really personally care about their departmental responsibilities. Donaldson cared, not for his own career, but passionately about advancing the interests of the arts and in particular the young men and women who were seeking a livelihood through the arts.

He was born John Donaldson in 1914, into the family of the Rev S.A. Donaldson, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and Lady Albia, née Hobart-Hampden, a scion of the Earls of Buckinghamshire. His early childhood was spent in the ambience of Eton, where 10 years later he himself was to go to school, and of Magdalen, where his father was, it was said, the first Master to pull the famous college out of the medieval doldrums.

Donaldson himself went not to his father's college but to Trinity, Cambridge, where he took first class honours in Part I of the Moral Sciences Tripos and subsequently in the Law Tripos. On graduation in 1935, prompted by experience of the Eton Missis Boys' Club in Hackney, east London, he went to work for three years at the

Pioneer Health Centre at Peckham. I recollect a conversation in which I spoke to him, as a fellow Old Etonian, that the Eton Mission had too much of a condescending element. Donaldson, normally the most equable of men, rounded on me and, almost vituperatively, told me that he owed a great deal to his experience in Peckham – an experience which, combined with working for a year as a truck driver, set the course of his life.

During the Second World War Donaldson served with the Sappers, and came into contact with the young Denis Healey, who was to be his lifelong friend. It was his friendship with Healey, Roy Jenkins and Dick Crossman, and – through farming – with Jim Callaghan, that commanded Donaldson to the Labour leadership. In his diary entry for 24 November 1965 Crossman records:

In the evening after a meeting of the Liaison Committee, which is now running smoothly in the absence of George Wigg, I was off to Covent Garden. I got there too late for the overture to *Figaro* but we had an enormously enjoyable time with Jack and Frankie Donaldson, sitting in the Royal Box and having our dinner behind the scenes. It was only marred by the fact that I had to go back to the House at 11 o'clock to see the Rhodesia Orders in Council through until 1.30 in the morning.

As his Parliamentary Private Secretary I remember that Crossman's mind was far more on the marvellous night he had had with the Donaldsons than on Ian Smith.

On Wednesday 8 December 1965:

That night Anne and I gave the Donaldsons dinner in exchange for their splendid hospitality... at Covent Garden. There we were in the Strangers' Dining Room, with George Wigg sitting at the next table to us. The Donaldsons are old Gritskellites but I think they found our company extremely pleasant. She, Frankie, is the daughter of Freddy Lonsdale, the famous playwright, and is herself a remarkable writer. Her book on the Marconi scandal, which is just out, is one of the best bits of political writing I know.

The most important decision Donaldson said he ever made was to marry Frances – the author of several books on farming, together with the life of her



Donaldson in 1976: translated passion into action

Photograph: Hulton Getty

father, a memoir of Evelyn Waugh, a superb biography of Edward VIII and her study of the Marconi Scandal which so entranced Crossman.

Having had a good war and being appointed OBE in 1943, he returned to farming, first in Gloucestershire, then in Buckinghamshire. In 1961 he became Honorary Secretary of the National Association of Discharged Prisoners Aid Societies and from 1963 to 1969 he was chairman of the Board of Visitors for Grendon Prison (a psychiatric prison with accommodation for some 300 inmates). From 1966 to 1974 he was the chairman of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders. As much as any man he transformed attitudes towards the obligations of society towards those who had been behind bars.

He was sent to the Lords by Harold Wilson in 1967, as Lord Donaldson of Kingsbridge. In 1969 the Government made him chairman of the committee, which reported in 1970, on Boy Entrance and Young Service-

men in the Armed Forces. His colleagues included Jimmy Hill, then head of sport at London Weekend Television, Admiral Sir Desmond Dreyer and Alan Thompson, former MP for Dunfermline Burghs, and now Professor Emeritus of Edinburgh University, who told me of Donaldson's considerable skill as a chairman.

He saw the system being at its least acceptable in the case of the young boy who joins up at 15½ or 16, full of enthusiasm, unwilling to listen to the cantications which are honestly given to him by the recruiting officer, who signs on for nine or 12 years from the age of 18. Then, if later he falls out of love with his chosen profession, or perhaps into love with a girl who wants to have him with her, he finds that he cannot adjust to the new situation by giving reasonable notice and leaving, but is stuck with the result of his 16-year-old enthusiasm.

Donaldson took the view that there was nothing truly voluntary about such a situation. It was compulsion applied ar-

bitrarily and selectively to those who have made the decision, before the law regards them as capable of entering into a responsible contract. Donaldson saw it as indefensible and the whole basis of recruitment improved as a result of his report.

From 1968 to 1974 he was Chairman of the National Committee of Family Service Units and from 1972 to 1974 of the Economic Development Committee for the Hotel and Catering Industry, to which he gave his experience as a director of the British Sugar Corporation from 1966 to 1974. In

March 1974 Harold Wilson

gave him ministerial responsibility in Northern Ireland. He embraced the concept of power sharing.

The ethos of the Labour Party as it was in the early 1980s was not congenial to Donaldson and in 1981 he joined the SDP, and seven years later, the Liberal Democrats. On the last occasion when I talked to him he gave the impression that he would like to come home to the Labour Party.

Tam Dalyell

**John George Stuart Donaldson**, farmer and politician; born Kingsbridge, Devon 9 October 1907; OBE 1943; director, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden 1959-74; director, Saddlers Wells 1962-74; chairman, National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders 1966-74; created 1967 Baron Donaldson of Kingsbridge; chairman, Consumer Council 1968-71; Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office 1974-76; President, RSPB 1975-80; Minister for the Arts 1976-79; married 1935 Frances Lonsdale (died 1994; one son, two daughters); died London 8 March 1998.

## Alex Kramer

IN 1941, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), the powerful performing rights organisation whose members included most of America's top songwriters, went on strike for higher royalties.

The strike, which kept all Ascap music off American radio for nearly a year, led to the formation of Broadcast Music, Inc (BMI), a rival licensing agency using many unknown songwriters. One of those unknowns was a 35-year-old Canadian named Alex Kramer. And so began a career that produced "Far Away Places", "Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens", "Come Ci, Come Ça", "It's Love, Love, Love", "Candy", and more than 125 other songs.

Kramer was born in Montreal, and studied at the city's McGill Conservatory of Music. At 17, he began providing piano accompaniment for silent films, later forming his own dance band, which made many broadcasts and played at restaurants and hotels all over Canada. He took a postgraduate course in Paris before coming to New York in 1938 to act as vocal coach for a music school. Taking advanced vocal training at the school was Kramer's future wife, an attractive band singer named Joan Whitney. She showed such a talent for composition that they began writing songs together, but publishers proved indifferent to their work. When the 1941 strike swept all Ascap songs from the airwaves, Kramer and Whitney were signed by BMI.

In collaboration with the lyricist El Zaret, they came up with "High on a Windy Hill" (1941), which became a best-selling single for Jimmy Dorsey, and for the bands of Sammy Kaye, Vaughan Monroe and Gene Krupa. Krupa also recorded the threesome's "It All Comes Back to Me Now" (1941), as did the bands of Eddie Duchin, Ted Weems and Hal Kemp.

The film *Stars on Parade* should have been called "Misnomers of 1944" because of the conspicuous absence of a single star in its cast. It did, however, introduce Kramer, Whitney and Mack David's "It's Love, Love, Love", which went on to become a best-selling record for the Guy Lombardo orchestra.

Despite a sub-standard Mack David lyric ("understands me" is hardly an ideal rhyme for "candy"), Kramer and Whitney had one of their biggest hits with

"Candy" (1945). Johnny Mercer, Jo Stafford and the Pied Pipers made it a No 1 record, and the Four King Sisters and Dinah Shore also had successful versions.

Without Mack David, the Kramers gave the Andrews Sisters a hit in 1946 with the calypso number "Money is the Root of All Evil (take it away, take it away, take it away)".

Nineteen forty-seven saw the founding of the music publishing firm of Kramer-Whitney, Inc. Among their hits as publisher/composers were "Love Somebody" (1947), which Doris Day recorded with Buddy Clark, and "That's the Beginning of the End" (1947), which both Benny Goodman and Perry Como recorded. The Kramers also wrote and published "Far Away Places" (1948), which gave Top Ten hits to Conn, Bing Crosby, Dinah Shore, Margaret Whiting, Vic Damone and Kate Smith. The song appeared for 19 weeks on America's *Top Hit Parade* radio show, remaining in the No 1 position for three of those weeks. Unlike most of their contemporaries, Kramer and Whitney survived the coming of the rock era; their "No Other Arms, No Other Lips" (1959) was a hit for the Chordettes.

Everything was grist to the Kramers' musical mill; their ballad "No Man is an Island" (1950) was derived from John Donne. "Come Ci, Come Ça" (1949) was based on a French melody by Bruno Coquatrix, and the poignant "My Sister and I" (1941) took its title from a book by Dirk van der Heide, who had fled to America with his sister after the German occupation of Holland. "Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens" (1950), a hit for Louis Jordan, was based on an old joke.

In 1951 "Chickens" was included when songs associated with Jordan became the basis for Clarke Peters's award-winning show *Five Guys Named Moe*. Then 88 years old, Kramer, whose wife Joan had died the previous year, took great pleasure in the fact that a song of theirs was one of the highlights of that joyous musical.

Dick Vosburgh

**Alex Charles Kramer**, lyricist, composer, pianist, conductor, publisher; born Montreal, Canada 30 May 1903; married Joan Whitney (died 1990; one son); died Fairfield, Connecticut 10 February 1998.

## Athol Rowan



Australia and Athol Rowan of South Africa. Laker, by taking 19 wickets in one Test in 1956, became a legend; Johnson went on to captain Australia and become secretary of the Australian Cricket Board; Rowan was a hero.

During the war, as an 18-year-old volunteer, he had joined the Transvaal Scottish and was taken prisoner at Tobruk. Escaping, he volunteered to join the South African Air Force and while on an officers' training course suffered a severe knee injury from an exploding mortar bomb. He refused to surrender a cricket career and when the Currie Cup competition resumed in 1946 he shuf-

fed up to bowl, his damaged leg fortified by an iron brace.

He was successful enough to be chosen for South Africa's tour of England in 1947, a summer of unending sunshine and flat pitches, and although he was hampered in the Tests, 12 wickets at an average of 59, he finished the leading wicket-taker (102) and exercised the critics with his success against Len Hutton, the batsman regarded as having the best defence.

He and his brother Eric, the opening batsman and often a member of his leg trap, appeared together in 10 Tests but Athol's Test career was necessarily short, bowling, as he often did, in pain. He had a tall,

high action with an unusual grip, spinning off the index finger and holding the ball with the seam upright, rather than across, in the traditional manner of spinners. He thus tended to be a little quicker through the air than many of his type with extra bounce, and his control of the seam meant his "arm ball" was more difficult to pick.

He took 24 wickets against England in their 1948-49 tour of the then Dominion and reached his apogee with the visit of Australia a year later. Bowling for Transvaal he took 15 wickets in the match, for 68, his first innings figures reading 9-19 in 15.4 overs. A cartilage operation prevented his playing in the Test

matches but he did tour England with the 1951 South Africans, taking 5-68 in England's second innings of the first Test.

He had an affable, easy-going temperament, ideal for the sometimes heartbreaking task of bowling spin, but at the age of 30 his physical handicap meant he had to retire with 54 wickets from his 15 Tests at an average of 38 and a score of invisible metal ribbons for bravery.

All the great batsmen of his day held him in the highest regard. He took Hutton's wicket 11 times, more often than Ray Lindwall, thus promoting a theory that Hutton was susceptible to off-break bowling. Hutton, in turn, regarded him and Laker

as the two most difficult off-spinners to counter. Many would argue that Rowan had the edge on good pitches.

John Arlott, writing on Rowan's retirement, described him as "the finest off-break bowler in the world". He played substantially less than 188 first-class matches in which the knee injury that was to eventually end his career was always both a physical handicap and a psychological brake which he had consciously to override with every ball he bowled.

And of his bowling in the Leeds test in 1947:

in an atmosphere like a steam chamber he bowled unrelaxed for three and a half hours on that batsman's wicket to yield only 89 runs to Hutton. Washbrook, Charlie Barnett, Bill Edrich and Compton... he earned

all the five wickets that fell; he took only one.

Rowan had endured seven operations on knee and leg when he made his last tour in 1951. According to Arlott, he thought he would never get past the second Test at Lord's, but

by packing his knee in a parcel of cotton wool and plaster he made it to the last, at the Oval, where he ensured his place in history when Hutton, sweeping, lobbed up the ball and then swatted at the ball, thinking it might fall on his stumps as Russell Endean moved round to take the catch. Hutton became the only Test batsman to be given out for obstructing the field.

Rowan dismissed Peter May

next ball but England won comfortably, Rowan dragging himself off the field "alone and quietly", saying to Arlott as he passed: "I shall never play again."

He would have taken great satisfaction from the fact that he was succeeded by South Africa's greatest off-spinner, Hugh "Toey" Tayfield, as South African cricket entered an era of supremacy that would have made them world champions but for the baleful advance of apartheid and the sanctions that followed.

Derek Hodgson

**Athol Rowan**, cricketer; born Johannesburg 7 February 1921; died Somerset West, South Africa 21 February 1998.

## BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

**BIRTHS**  
**CORNERSTONE**: On 4 March 1998, in Andre's in Helen, a daughter, Louise Freya Curtis, a sister for George.

**LIDDELL**: On March 12 Cleo (née Berlin) and David, a daughter, Phoebe Carla, a sister for Freya and Rupert.

**DEATHS**  
**CAUDWELL**: Tropically, in a sailing accident, David Caudwell, aged 26, weeks below son of Paul and Jill, of Holloway, North London, and his brother of the Australian Cricket Board, Rowan. The Caudwells, of the Caudwell Media Group, had been involved in a dispute with the British tabloid press, and David had been threatened with legal action by the Daily Mirror and the Sun. He died in hospital in Valencia, Spain, on 12 March.

**ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS**  
The Queen has announced that the engagement of Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, to Sophie Rhys-Jones, daughter of the former Welsh footballer, Alan Jones, has been fixed for Saturday 12 July 1998 at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.

## BIRTHDAYS

**Prince Edward**, 34; Sir Lawrence Airy, former Chairman, Board of Inland Revenue, 72; Sir Robert Bellinger, former Lord Mayor of London, 88; Sir Colin Marshall Sir Brian Burnett, 84; Sir Paul Condon, Commissioner, Metropolitan Police, 51; Baroness Fullerton, former Political and Social Secretary to Lord Rennison of Rennison, 66; Mr David Fall, Ambassador to Vietnam, 50; Mr Paul Farnell, pianist, 70; Sir Angus Fraser, former chairman of the Board of Customs and Excise, 70; Dame Margaret Fry, political organiser, 67; Mr Barry Gardner MP, 51; Rear-Admiral Sir John Garnier, 81; Sir Ernesto Gómez, 86; Sir Charles Hardie, chartered accountant, 88; Mr Jerry Hopkins, Welsh rugby player, 41; Mr Hugh Johnson, wine connoisseur, 59; General Sir John Leamont, former Quartermaster General, Ministry of Defence, 64; Mr Anthony Leonard, Chief Constable, Humberside, 59; Lord Montagu of Oxford, chairman, Monogram Multimedia Ltd, 66; Mr Graeme Odgers, former Chairman, Monopolies and Mergers Commission, 64; Sir Michael Straker, former chairman, Northumbrian Water, 70; Mr Peter Wormald, former Registrar General for England and Wales, 62.

## ANNIVERSARIES

**BIRTHS** Henry Watson Fowler, author of *English Usage*, 1858; Deshae Jan Garrigue Menken, cartoonist, comic strip artist, 1904; On this day D.W. Griffith's film *In Old California* was released – the first to be made in Hollywood, 1910; Sir Oswald Mosley was expelled from the Labour Party, 1931; James Earl Ray pleaded guilty to the murder of Martin Luther King, 1968. Today is Commonwealth Day and the Feast Day of St Anastasia, St Ariatius, St Artatius, St Cedronius and Others, St Dorotheus or Drotte, St Hyacinth, St John Ogilvie, St Kessog, St Macarius of Jerusalem and St Simplicius, pope.

## LECTURES

Gresham College (Barnard's Inn Hall, London EC1): Professor Ian Stewart: "Queer Dido's Hide & Seek", 6.30pm, 6 April; Professor Sir John Leamont, former Quartermaster General, Ministry of Defence, 64; Mr Anthony Leonard, Chief Constable, Humberside, 59; Lord Montagu of Oxford, chairman, Monogram Multimedia Ltd, 66; Mr Graeme Odgers, former Chairman, Monopolies and Mergers Commission, 64; Sir Michael Straker, former chairman, Northumbrian Water, 70; Mr Peter Wormald, former Registrar General for England and Wales, 62.

# Nothing's a patch on will power

Smokers spend £32m a year on nicotine substitutes, but do they really work? Milly Jenkins reports

TOMORROW is No Smoking Day. Many of Britain's 12 million smokers will pause when they see the "Ready, Steady, Stop" posters, and for one melancholy moment think about how they really ought to stop. Eleven million of them will snap out of it, shrugging the thought off with a reassuring, "I'll do it next week/month/year." But one million of them, the ones who have really had enough, will go for it.

Most of them will depend on will power, but about a quarter will use some form of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) — gum, patches, nasal sprays or the "fashionable" new inhalators, which look like plastic cigarette-holders — some of the guests at last month's Brit Awards were spotted having a drag on hand-painted inhalators.

Whether they go through the night without succumbing to the real thing is another question. The depressing truth is that although these products do increase your chances of giving up, the success rate is low. Pharmacia & Upjohn, the makers of the market leader Nicorette, say using NRT "typically doubles or triples the success rates when compared to those smokers who quit using will power alone". What the trials show is that people using will power have a success rate of 1-3 per cent for every quit attempt, while those using NRT have a 5-10 per cent chance of stopping.

The more positive evidence is that people who join specialist smoking clinics, as well as using NRT, have a much higher chance of stopping — up to 20-25 per cent in some trials. This is compared to a 10-12 per cent success rate for people attending clinics without using NRT. The trouble is there are very few clinics. As there is no funding available, they depend on the enthusiasm of the medical staff who run them.

But most people using NRT are buying it over the counter, getting only minimal advice from the pharmacist. Apart from the nasal spray, NRT is not available on prescription and, given the 90 per cent failure rate for using it without support, seems expensive. The NRT market is worth about £32.4m a year in the UK. Nicorette's gum

costs about £15 for a week's worth and £180 for the recommended three months. The inhalator starter pack is £5.95, with cartridge refills costing £19.95 a week.

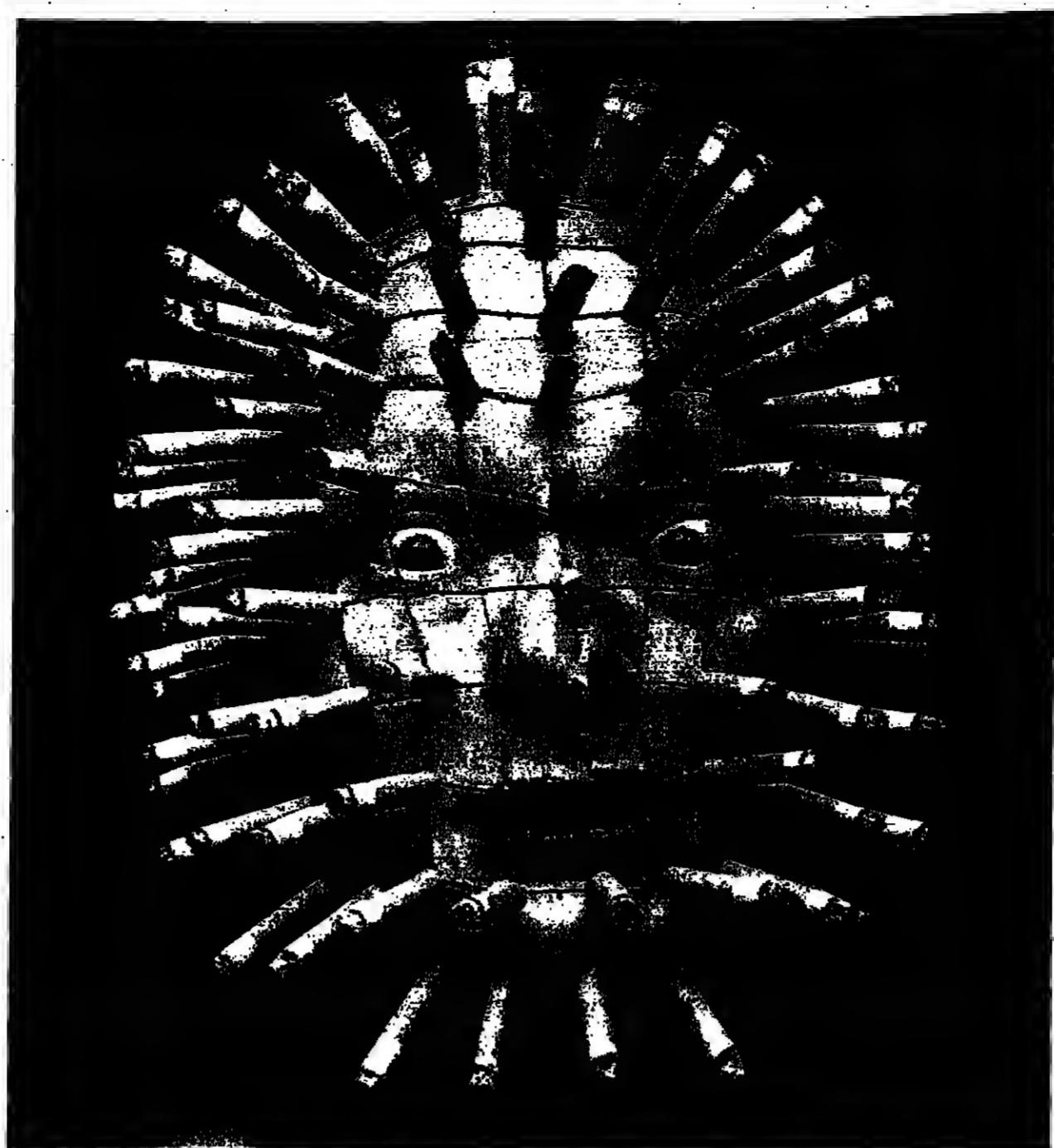
"NRT is the only method proven to work," says Gillian Riley, an addiction counsellor and NRT sceptic. "But only drug companies can afford to do trials. There is no research into other techniques." Her main objection to NRT is the implication that physical withdrawal from nicotine is a significant part of giving up, and that the solution is to maintain nicotine levels in the bloodstream. "Stopping smoking is primarily a mental process," she says. "Nicotine leaves the body less than 24 hours after the last cigarette. Unless you deal with the psychological side, the conflict between wanting a cigarette and wanting to give up, it's always going to be difficult."

Smokers, certainly, seem to perceive NRT as being useful. This may be because of the £6.5m Pharmacia & Upjohn spend on advertising every year, or because of their own experience of trying to stop. A survey of smokers, published yesterday by the organisers of National No Smoking Day, found that 44 per cent wanted cheaper, subsidised NRT. Second on their wish list, was more smoking clinics.

But Dr Andrew Sherwood, who runs a clinic at his Kings Lynn practice, says persuading people to get help is incredibly difficult. Even though two-thirds of smokers say they want to stop, most of them are in a "pre-contemplative" stage. "That means they want to stop, just not now," he says.

Although doubtful about NRT's worth, he would like to be able to prescribe it. "It would at least provide an opening gambit to talk about smoking, which on the whole people are reluctant to do. But what we need is better techniques for dealing with the psychological side," he says. "What I tell people is that it will help them stop, but it won't help them stay stopped — that it will get them about 10 to 15 yards in an 100-yard race."

She lasted two weeks, before having a puff at a party and finding



Caught in a trap: the money smokers spend on gums, patches and inhalators may be better spent on specialist help

## Patches didn't take away the urge

"I'M A REALLY dedicated smoker. I just love it. I've only had two serious attempts at giving up — once using patches, once after seeing Alan Carr's stop smoking video," says Emma Messenger, 27, who smokes 20 a day and has no intention of trying to give up again soon. "The patches were OK. You can feel it stopping in, but it didn't take away the urge in those moments when you catch sight of a box of Marlboro, or you're getting ready to go out."

She lasted two weeks, before having a puff at a party and finding

herself back as a full-time smoker before she knew it. "I'd already cheated a few times, smoking when I had the patch on, a bit like Patsy in *Absolute Fabulous*."

Watching Alan Carr, she says, was a "near religious experience" and she stuck it out for six weeks. She recently had go on a friend's inhalator. "Disgusting. I've never coughed so much in all my life. Next time I do it, I'll watch Alan Carr again and then go cold turkey."

"I reckon it's all about tricking your mind."

## It's a psychological battle, not physical

"I HAVE to stand still and sit still at myself," says Brian Harvey, who gave up smoking seven weeks ago. "I fight and argue, telling myself I don't want to smoke." Now 53, he had his first cigarette at 16 and had been smoking 60 a day, costing him £70 a week. Having just retired from teaching, he decided it was time to stop, and contacted Quit, who told him about a clinic at St George's Hospital in south London. He did a group course there for six weeks which advised using some sort of nicotine replacement.

"I've found the gum is pretty helpful, although the moral support is just as important. I'd tried gum before but thought it was a complete waste of time, probably because I didn't know how to use it properly... I also thought it was a substitute for smoking, which it's not."

"You've got to go off and do something else, stone painting or use the computer. That urge is gradually going away but when it comes, now about every two or three days, it feels like more of a psychological battle than physical one."

## A pain for men only

"I EXPERIENCED two weeks of fever, terrible pain and passed blood in my urine. I was hospitalised but then sent home because it was told the problem was difficult to treat."

"I had five months off work, took a variety of drugs — many of which made things far worse — and, without medication, I still feel really ill, tingly all over, sick, numb and in a lot of pain."

"Although I have good and bad days, it's still tough going for me."

Jon Bernades, 46, has been affected by a little-known but surprisingly common condition called prostatitis, one of several diseases targeting that small but troublesome male organ at the base of the bladder, the prostate gland. The symptoms vary from a short-lived flu-like infection with some passing of blood to a chronic condition that often causes severe pain around the pelvis and beyond.

While prostate cancer has recently received belated media and medical attention, non-life-threatening prostate conditions like prostatitis and benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) — a swelling of the prostate often leading to severe urinary problems — have remained what Bernades calls "Cinderella" diseases: little-understood, under-researched, poorly publicised and inadequately treated.

Today, however, these conditions will receive some much-needed attention. The Men's Prostate Health Project, based at the University of Wolverhampton and co-ordinated by Bernades, is publishing the first-ever survey of men affected by non-cancerous prostate problems and holding a conference in London to discuss the results.

The survey, which looked at the experiences of 565 men, dispels the common belief that those with prostate problems are a collection of Private Godfathers, geriatric geniuses forever rushing off to the toilet.

In fact, prostatitis is thought to affect up to one-third of men aged 25-50 while a similar proportion of men aged over 50 suffer from benign prostatic hyperplasia, or BPH.

The findings reflect the dramatic effects on men's lives. And although two-thirds of men felt their doctors were generally sympathetic, many said GPs and urologists were unwilling to respond to early symptoms, did not always carry out sufficient tests, gave conflicting advice or made unnecessary or ineffective interventions.

Peter Baker

For details of the Prostate Health Association, send two first class stamps to PHA, Langworth, Lincoln LN3 5DE.

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DR PHIL  
HAMMOND

## The show where every needle earns a point

FOLLOWING the phenomenal success of *Tube and Fibs* (Channel 5, passim), I've been inundated with requests to devise an even more cerebral medical quiz. Here's my first effort, a direct copy of the one nobody can do on Radio 4.

The Round Medicine Quiz

How would you get from dirt to asthma to the Berlin Wall to homeopathy to vaccination to West Africa to asthma (again) to death to £2,340 to struck off patients to autism to 1976?

I've no idea.

Well then, have a go.

Why should I?

Because this is a half-hour quiz and we've only managed to fill 30 seconds of it.

That's not my problem.

Look, we've got you all the way down from Doncaster, fed you, wined you and given you the chance to shine on national television.

For yes, How did you...

Or I stick this bloody great needle straight in your eye.

Fair enough. Dirt to asthma was in the papers.

And what's the link?

I've just said. They were both in the paper in the same story. Are you deaf?

No, but what was the story?

I dunno. The headline said "dirt-asthma link" but I didn't read the article.

Have a guess then.  
No, quite the reverse in fact. A study by the Institute of Child Health at Bristol University found that children who bath every day and wash their hands more than 5 times a day are 25 per cent more likely to get asthma.

The Round Medicine Quiz

Cities in West Germany had asthma rates double those in the East — because East German kids' immune systems were properly primed

Yes for...

No, let me guess. To reunify patient's symptoms or psychological state...

Well done.

And vaccination is there, I presume, because like homeopathy it works on the principle of treating like with like...

Yes, only homeopathy doesn't work. Ha ha ha.

I disagree. There's an increasing body of evidence to suggest it may have an effect in conditions such as hay fever.

A point off for being a smartarse.

Now West Africa and vaccination. Wasn't there a study that children who were vaccinated against measles were twice as likely to develop asthma in later childhood than those who had measles infection?

So was the immunisation programme stopped?

No, because children who weren't vaccinated were much more likely to die from measles, especially if they were poorly nourished or chronically ill.

And what about the UK?

Because English children come from larger families, get more childhood infections and use fewer antibiotics. So

more than their peers.

Presumably that's because the kids need to experience a few germs to get their immune system primed properly so they don't over-react to allergens when they get older.

For yes. How did you...

And when the Berlin wall came down, it was expected that asthma rates would be much higher in the dirty, polluted East than the squeaky clean West, but in fact cities in West Germany had asthma rates of two and a half times those in the East.

Why was that then?

Because English children come from larger families, get more childhood infections and use fewer antibiotics. So

more than their peers.

Presumably that's because the kids need to experience a few germs to get their immune system primed properly so they don't over-react to allergens when they get older.

For yes. How did you...

And what about autism?

I've no idea if it's linked to the MMR vaccine — but given the media scare would he ever more reasonable to strike a family off who didn't want it. At present I'm unconvinced by the evidence and will continue to have my kids immunised but I know GPs who've stopped.

Remember 1976?

Exactly. There was a scare about whooping cough vaccine and brain damage, and although a later study found that lasting damage was a rare as to be unquantifiable vaccination rates dropped 30 per cent over 300,000 children went down with whooping cough and at least 1000



# Madonna: the mother of all pop

The tabloid hyenas say she's lost her way. Not so, says Suzanne Moore. She knows exactly where she's going

IT IS a strange thing to be nearly 40 and still find yourself dancing around in your bedroom to a pop record, especially when that music is made by a woman of much the same age, who was never, ever going to be famous for 15 minutes of fame. Madonna has been famous for 15 years. During that time she has grown up a lot – and so have I, but clearly not enough to feel unexcited by the release of her best record in years, *Ray of Light*.

There are, of course, the begrudgers. Madonna, we have been told recently by interviewer after interviewer, isn't as beautiful as you think she is. She is not even sexy. She wore a blanket for one encounter with the press, for goodness sake. She has gone grungy, her hair is a mess. She looks positively crusty. She has become a hippy. I have read all these things in the last few weeks. The sub-text to all this is that a successful woman can never be truly happy, and worse – the most dreadful thing that can ever happen to a woman has happened to her – she has let herself go.

Well, yes, she has let herself go, but not in the way that the tabloid hyenas mean. Madonna is freer than she ever was and she looks amazing. Don't tell me that this is simply because she has been photographed by Mario Testino, the man who reputedly produces a post-coital glow in every woman he snaps. She looks fabulous because she is fabulous. Motherhood has not ruined her – if Testino's recent *Family Fair* pictures of her with her baby, Lourdes, are anything to go by, it may have even made her relax a little. The queen of the treadmill has taken up yoga. Maybe she is even becoming a little more flexible.

Madonna's embracing of the ethereal rather than material side of life has been rubbish, too. She has gone all cosmic because spirituality is the fashion accessory *du jour*. Yoga, the Kabbalah, hennaed Sanskrit symbols on her hands? Is it any different to her Eighties interest in cossery? Is all this going with the New Age flow any deeper, any more meaningful than Edina Monsoon's chanting and crystal healing? What next – Liam Gallagher becomes a Quaker? Is she guilty of just doing that mid-life pop star trip, like every other superstar before her, of getting a religion, preferably an Eastern one, to stave off a mid-life crisis?

But for Madonna an interest in faith and mysticism is hardly new. She was



formed entirely by her Catholicism and every move she made, every symbol she dangled in front of us was her way of publicly losing her religion. Long before she became an icon herself she understood the value of iconography, hardly surprising in one named after the blessed Virgin herself.

The charge, as always, is that she is not to be taken seriously, that she is a fake. If this is true then she has been faking it for so long that we wonder if even she can tell the difference any more, because there is no one on the planet who knows more about image and artifice than this woman. For all these years she has teased us with the prospect of showing us the real

Madonna, of opening her heart as well as her legs to the world. While she shed one veil of femininity, she mysteriously draped herself in another.

Yet the more she revealed, the less we knew. The one thing that I was sure of after having seen the movie *In Bed with Madonna* was that she was more real performing on stage than when she was "being herself" off it. We saw just what she wanted us to see, and Warren Beatty's famous remark that she was not living if she was "off camera" stuck in our heads, because at the end of the day we knew that Ms Ciccone, control freak extraordinaire, had allowed that remark to be recorded on camera.

It is this determination both to exploit and explore her own fame and its consequences that makes her so utterly compelling. The nature of fame is a struggle that our artists and novelists still struggle with – the meaning of celebrity, the life examined and examined yet again. And here in the eye of the storm, the most famous woman in the world is doing it for herself: "I traded fame for love" is the first line of the new album, *Ray of Light*, a collection of songs about love and loneliness and the impossibility of making intimate connections when you are carrying around the baggage of mega-stardom. It is also about what it is to both lose a mother and to become a mother. Some critics

may have described it as sixth-form poetry, but these lyrics were never meant to be poetry. They are pop songs alive with the great wash of mood and rhythm and life-force that only music can bring.

Madonna knows in her very soul that the dance floor is a magical place, not because she belongs to the chemical generation, but because she knows about the alchemy of sex, ambition and female desire that drove her there in the first place. "Only when you are dancing can you feel this free."

It is this knowledge that is the source of her power, what makes her so irresistible to women and so unsettling for her detractors. When Madonna, a woman so

obviously in control of her own destiny, spoke of desire, she did so aggressively in sexual bras, in masturbation dance sequences, in her taunting of Latino lovers and joyous flagrancy.

When she decided to turn herself from a sexual subject into a sex object for her book *Sex*, a work she now regards as an act of rebellion, she was derided. It was thought that she revealed too much, as though showing her naked body was the same as baring her soul. The critics held up before us the holy trinity of failure – the over-hyped sex book, a contrived catalogue of taboo-busting, the mediocre *Erotica* album and a disastrous role in *Body of Evidence*.

Then she did something truly shocking. She learned how to sing. She made *Evita* and then she had the much longed-for love-child.

Not for her the passive Bridget Jones-style ticking of the biological clock. She would have a baby, even if it meant being a single parent, and like Jodie Foster she is rich and famous and clever enough to do it by any method she damn well pleases.

We love Madonna – as we loved Princess Diana – because of her flaws, because she bangs on about her unhappy childhood, her failed relationships, about the sheer loneliness of the long-distance celebrity. We see a woman who, like Diana, has it all but who says sometimes she feels empty inside.

And we see a survivor. Madonna has made mistakes, looked bad, looked good, has been too poor to take the Subway, too famous to leave the house. She is a star and will be for a very long time. Her sexuality is a work in progress. Suddenly she is cool enough to appear on the front of *NME* – she is the mother of all pop – and even stuns on the cathedral of tack that is the National Lottery show. She even got away with singing Andrew Lloyd Webber songs. Here she is again at number one, the ethereal girl still pushing more product than ever.

To see woman free from the need for approval is still a rare and beautiful thing. She does exactly what she wants, when she wants. It doesn't really matter what we think of her. "Nothing really matters" she sings on *Ray of Light*, and you know she means it. Which is precisely why she continues to matter so much.



## 'That neglected dog broke my heart'

REVELATIONS: ANNETTE CROSBIE

The time: Spring 1993  
The place: Wimbledon  
The woman: Annette Crosbie



"I'M ALMOST 64, unfortunately I know myself pretty well by now and it is not a comfortable position to be in. I would prefer to be different in many ways from the person I am. Especially now that I have a crusade, I wish I were more analytical and quieter – because I tend to go in with all guns blazing and that's not a good idea. I've done it all my life and I don't seem to be able to alter.

I've always been passionate, I'm exhausted by the time I finish the Sunday newspapers, but until about five years ago I've never felt strongly enough

about anything to campaign. I just happened to read an appeal for homes for ex-racing greyhounds. Up to that moment I hadn't given them a thought.

I went to the kennels where there were a lot of young greyhounds barking and jumping around in a pen. The re-homer went away and came back with this dog whose coat was dull, he had fleas, his nose was all crusty. He looked a pretty sorry sight. However, I didn't realise just how big a problem I'd taken on until we took him through the front door of the house: he walked down the hallway into the kitchen, slipped on the cork tile floor, panicked, leapt against the near-

est cupboard and couldn't be moved. It was a revelation because that dog broke my heart and changed my life.

We called him Tati, after Jacques Tati. He was only young when we got him. Although greyhounds start racing at 18 months, they retire about three and that's all the life they have on the track. When I touched him – he had completely spooked him – he had never been cuddled, never been played with and didn't know what toys are for. I found myself with an animal that I knew nothing about, how it had been treated nor its temperament, because it takes along time for their personality to come through.

Fortunately, although I didn't know it at the time, greyhounds are the steadiest, gentlest, quietest dogs. Eventually there did come a day when Tati's eyes lit up and his tail did wag – because they don't when you first get them. They are like institutionalised human beings.

These days, I live with my daughter, who fortunately is as crazy about greyhounds as I am because we've now taken on another two. I discovered that there are thousands of dogs looking for homes but people won't take them on because there are myths about the breed: they will need a lot of exercise (greyhounds are bred for bursts of speed not stamina – two walks of 20 minutes is all they need) they will chase and kill anything that runs (not true – all my greyhounds walk off the lead and I never have any problems).

I get very angry about people who race greyhounds. If the

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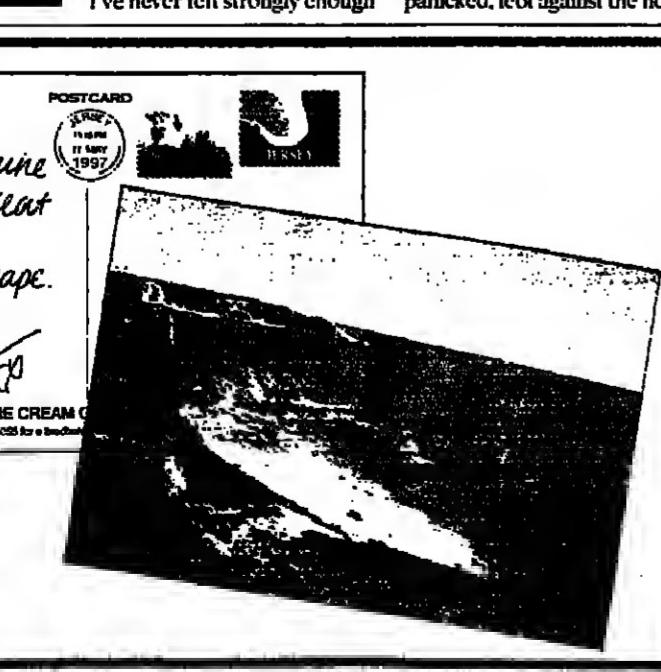
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JULIA IN KIDS

# THE INDEPENDENT

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## Drum-beating will not help Kosovo

TELEVISION pictures of tanks on village streets, harrowing stories of families split apart by brutal policemen, the bloody evidence of ethnic conflict ... no wonder that the drum is being beaten for foreign intervention in Kosovo. The American Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, has been vocal and she has been echoed by the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook. She talks ominously of the Milosevic regime "paying the price".

This, however, is dangerous language and the British government should think very carefully before associating itself so closely with the American line that all the world is a potential target for military intervention. To stick to President Clinton over Iraq like Brer Rabbit to the Tar Baby is one thing but over Kosovo the British government – *pro tem* president of the European Union – risks another deep rift between the European powers which would expose, once again, the pretentious talk of a "common" European foreign policy.

Loose talk about intervention also gives an incentive to the Kosovo Albanian insurgents to up the ante – the more Serbs they can kill and the more ground they can claim prior to such an intervention, the better their prospects. There are clear analogies between the situation in Kosovo and that in Yugoslavia as a whole before it broke up. Some experts suggest the lessons from Bosnia are clear: intervene now to prevent major ethnic bloodshed later. They would, however, be more convincing if they also described what kind of arrangement of states and ethnic groupings intervention is intended to create. Look at Bosnia, hanging on as an entity by the skin of the teeth of British and other Nato troops. To say that intervention is about keeping the peace alone will not do. The Albanian majority in Kosovo deserve protection from abuse, to be sure, but do they deserve a landlocked statelet which would be economically unviable? Even the Americans do not contemplate that.

The United States, which already has forces on the ground in the Balkans, in Bosnia and Macedonia, cannot be the universal policeman; once the policeman starts getting shot at (and Serbian passion over Kosovo should not be underestimated or written off as some ploy by Slobodan Milosevic) then it is likely to withdraw.

Mr Milosevic is a cruel opportunist with no vision to offer the Serbs. But he operates in troubled waters. The European Union countries cannot agree on sanctions, let alone military intervention. The Russians are more closely exercised by their ethnic kin in Serbia than they are about Iraq. In such circumstances the very phrase "international community" (much loved by our Foreign Secretary) does not have a great deal of meaning. Britain and the United States and perhaps Germany might make financial sanctions effective in the long run: Russia and Greece are hardly in a position to lend Belgrade money. Such pressure should be applied immediately and tightly but ought not to be accompanied by belligerent promises that might lead the Albanian insurgents to imagine a white knight will come to their rescue.

## Parental panic on TV



EVER SINCE *Bill and Ben*, parents have been the worst critics of children's television. The puppets mis-spoke, they were not intelligible – most of the criticisms levelled at the Teletubbies were anticipated at the dawn of the children's television age. Children in front of the screen become typeset as victims, things to be manipulated by advertisers, animators and the Woodentops. But listen to children themselves. Their huge capacity to understand the medium, to ironise and challenge its conventions is often neglected. The second World Summit on television for children, which opened in London yesterday, will do well not to underestimate children's television literacy. "Dumbing down" is an attractive argument for adults, who tend to forget it was their own parents who first alleged it. Has there been a generation since Adam when parents have not fretted about the cultural condition of their offspring?

Not all change is for the worse, but neither ought it to be uncritically accepted. Children's access to the Internet can be a tool for acquiring new knowledge; equally it can augment those forces in the modern world which make childhood innocence so short-lived. There are trends afoot in television which favour animation against drama and factual programmes. You do not have to fondly recollect *Blue Peter* of old to believe that programming for children should – as for adults – offer a rich mix. Wall-to-wall cartoons, the potential result of ghettoisation on children's channels with low budgets, bore them.

An academic study by Sonia Livingstone suggests British teenagers do live a rather different life from their contemporaries elsewhere in Europe. A "bedroom culture" would be worrying if it implied young people were growing up autistic, asocial. But other studies have suggested teenagers also often fall prey to peer pressure. And spare a thought for the teenager for whom privacy, in your own bedroom, is the most important thing in the world. Are British young people more materialistic? Parents do face headline pressure, to be sure – which tends to be all the sharper among those on low incomes. But not all children are acquisitive monsters; not all so lack sensitivity for their parents' feelings or their families' circumstances that they insist they cannot live without Nike or Diesel. Conversation about young people's tastes goes on incessantly – but the most important thing is that, in families and in society at large, we ensure it is not one-sided: that children's aspirations and judgements are sought and carefully weighed.

### Serbia's path to war

REFERRING to the Kosovar Liberation Army as "shady" ("Cook pleads on deaf ears as Serb police blitz villages", 6 March) lends credence to the Serb notion that they are a terrorist group. Terrorists are military units which mercilessly attack innocent civilians outside their own country (or foreigners within it) to draw attention to their cause. The KLA are defending their homes and families against an internal aggressor and trying to fight their way back to the semblance of democracy they enjoyed under Tito.

If Slobodan Milosevic continues down this path – a course which has been escalating for years – the result will involve several other countries in the region and perhaps even Turkey, making Bosnia look like a picnic. Such a war (specifically the hundreds of thousands of displaced refugees) will be felt throughout Europe for many years to come and one way or another, we will pay for it.

CLAUDIA ROYSTON  
London SW19

I HAVE recently returned from the area around the city of Vukovar, which in January passed from the UN back to Croat control. The Croat campaign of terror against the Serb refugees began the very next day, with the aim of ethnically cleansing them from the area.

On my return I was naively surprised to find no mention of these and other horrors, although I have since noticed a small and obscure paragraph on the subject. With the actions of the Serbs in Kosovo on the front page (9 March), would I be wrong in assuming that if the situation in Vukovar had been the reverse and the Croats had been the victims, the coverage might have been greater?

It is easy to identify a "baddie" and stick to that choice, but no one ethnic group has a monopoly on evil and aggression. We do the Balkans no favours by demonising the Serbs and presenting a complicated conflict in simplistic terms.

ALISON M DRAPER  
Sevenoaks, Kent

I SINCERELY hope that your informant about the focus of the current government spending review has got his wires crossed ("Clean-up for NHS merit award system", 3 March). I am astounded at the suggestion that

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JOHN A DAVIS  
Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire

### Heavy NHS workload

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of the Rossing uranium mine.

HUGH LINDSAY  
Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria

The writer was RC Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle 1974-92

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Chairman  
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FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

## Reed calls off £18bn link-up with Wolters

By Peter Thal Larsen

Reed Elsevier, the Anglo-Dutch publishing group, yesterday shocked the stock market when it called off its proposed £18bn merger with Wolters Kluwer, the Dutch group after the deal ran into opposition from European competition authorities.

In a joint statement, the two companies said that "in the last few days Wolters Kluwer has made it known to Reed Elsevier that it needed to renegotiate a number of the terms of the proposed merger." This came after Wolters Kluwer concluded that the conditions set by regulators for clearing the deal would have "adverse implications for the benefits of the merger for the respective shareholders of all three companies".

A Wolters spokeswoman said that disposals required by the regulators would have threatened the company's 15 percent annual earnings growth target.

However, the parties said no other matters had arisen in the course of the financial due diligence between the parties that would otherwise have given cause for the merger to be cancelled.

The merger, which was announced last October, was to have created the world's largest professional and scientific publishing group, with combined profits of £1.3bn on sales of £5bn, and with dominant positions in medical and legal publishing.

However, it had attracted vociferous opposition from consumers, who argued that the combined company's grip on certain markets would be too strong.

In recent years Reed Elsevier, which is controlled by holding companies Reed International

and Elsevier, has concentrated on building up its positions in what it calls "must-have" information - scientific, legal and professional information that consumers must have access to at all costs. The company, which is led by joint chief executives Nigel Stapleton and Herman Bruggink, has also spearheaded the move into on-line publishing.

Shares in Reed International plunged 57p to 630p on the news while Elsevier shares fell 3.16 guilders at 34.50. Shares in Wolters Kluwer closed down 3.90 guilders at 303.10. Shares in the three companies had risen by between 10 and 20 per cent since the merger was announced.

Analysts said the news was a setback for Reed, but was not fatal. "It's not the end of the world. It's more a question of lost opportunity," said Louise Barton, an analyst at Henderson Crosthwaite.

The merger was not about cost cutting - the cost savings of the deal were expected to be no more than £50m. Experts had expected the deal to increase both companies' growth rates into the next century.

Reed Elsevier and Wolters had described the benefits as "synergies". Users of both com-



Nigel Stapleton: Plans for 'synergies' collapsed

panies products, however, were concerned that the merger would give them the power to increase prices in some of their markets.

The European Commission had received complaints about the potential dominance of the tax and legal publication business. Legal companies currently marketing their products through Reed's Lexis-Nexis online database were also worried that their products would be pushed out in favour of Wolters Kluwer's offerings.

The complaints found a sympathetic hearing with the Commission, which last December said it had "serious doubts" about the proposed deal, arguing that there were "very significant overlaps between the activities of both parties in several areas [for example, in the areas of legal and tax publishing] where the position of either one or both of the parties seems already strong at the moment."

US competition authorities were also scrutinising the merger closely.

Industry experts said yesterday the prospect of being forced to sell more business than expected may have scuppered the deal. "They've had a huge number of objections and would have had to sell a large number of the businesses," said one analyst. "There was a huge hassle factor. It takes time to do these things."

Analysts said Reed was now likely to concentrate on building up its business through a series of smaller acquisitions. The company, which has brought forward the reporting of its full-year 1997 results to Thursday, has a strong balance sheet following the January sale of IPC, its consumer magazine business, to a management buyout team for £950m.

Outlook, page 19

Investors take fright as President Suharto presses ahead with currency board plans



An money changer counting millions of rupiah in Jakarta yesterday. The Indonesian currency was quoted as low as 12,250 to the US dollar before recovering slightly to 10,500 in afternoon trade after differences between the International Monetary Fund and Jakarta burst into the open

## Rupiah dives as Indonesia blames IMF for potential social upheaval

By Stephen Vines  
in Hong Kong

sian tremor but recovered by the end of trading.

INDONESIA lashed out at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for delaying payments from a \$40bn (£24bn) rescue plan, warning that some of the agency's reforms could trigger social upheaval.

The moves dealt another blow to Indonesia's battered credibility with investors, sending the rupiah tumbling as much as 20 per cent to the dollar, and pushing the benchmark stock index down 3.2 per cent.

Yesterday, on the eve of President Suharto's re-election, his administration indicated that it was ready to go it alone if the IMF insisted on unacceptable reforms.

At a meeting with political leaders President Suharto said: "The IMF package will impose a liberal economy, which is not in line with the constitution."

It was left to one of his ministers, Ginandjar Kartasasmita, who is responsible for national development planning, to up the stakes further. He said yesterday: "We welcome international bodies such as the IMF and the World Bank to help Indonesia. But if that means they can impose their will or dominate us, we would be better off without their aid."

Although this tough talking may well appeal to the nationalistic sentiments of the hand-picked National Assembly members, it did not impress the investment community which promptly sparked yet another run on the local currency.

The slump triggered falls elsewhere in Asia stocks fell in Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and the Philippines in the wake of a 20 per cent decline in the value of the rupiah.

Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia also felt the Indone-

sian tremor but recovered by the end of trading.

Among the most contentious issues between the IMF and the Indonesian government is President Suharto's enthusiasm for a currency board to tie the Indonesia rupiah to the US dollar at a fixed rate.

Bambang Trihatmodjo, one of the President's sons, said that his father intended to announce the establishment of a currency board after his swearing-in tomorrow.

Not only the IMF but all countries which are contributing to the bailout oppose the creation of a currency board.

The head of foreign exchange trading at a European bank in Singapore said that a board system would last no more than a few weeks at the most and then the currency would spiral into freefall.

"If that happens it would be catastrophic," he said. "There's been some wild talk about boards of boat people invading Malaysia and Singapore if Indonesia collapses, but now it doesn't seem so wild."

At the end of last week the IMF announced a delay in the disbursement of the second tranche of the \$43bn bailout. Although IMF officials tried to play down the delay, it clearly demonstrates that an impasse has been reached over implementation of the IMF reform package.

Spokesmen for the IMF kept a low profile, hoping that the government in Jakarta can be pulled back from the brink without a confrontation. However, hopes of this happening are dwindling. In New York yesterday, Lawrence Summers, US Deputy Treasury Secretary, declined to comment on the latest developments in the unfolding financial crisis.

Unrest grows, page 11

## Halifax trumps rival with £780m Midshires bid

By Lea Paterson

HALIFAX, the banking group, last night trumped the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) in the battle for Birmingham Midshires with a £780m rival bid for the building society. Halifax's offer represents a premium of 24-29 per cent over RBS's offer of between £65m and £630m.

David Gilchrist, Halifax group secretary, said the Royal of Scotland's bid "significantly undervalued the business".

The RBS had earlier said it would not raise its offer "under any circumstances".

City experts said Halifax's offer would be good news for

more than 1 million Birmingham Midshires' members - who each stand to net an additional windfall payment of up to £150 - but could be bad news for the building society's 2,000 employees.

The RBS said it would preserve the Birmingham Midshires brand as well as its 15-strong branch network. It has also guaranteed jobs for Birmingham Midshires employees for three years.

City analysts believe Halifax is likely to cut jobs and close branches in order to justify the premium it has put on the building society.

Halifax has pledged to keep the Birmingham Midshires brand for at least three years, but has

made no guarantees about jobs or the branch network. Mr Gilchrist said no such guarantees would be forthcoming, although he stressed that Halifax's previous large acquisitions - Clerical Medical and the Leeds Permanent Building Society - were completed without the need for any compulsory redundancies.

A Birmingham Midshires spokesperson said the directors were considering Halifax's offer. On the subject of possible job losses, he said: "It has always been integral to Birmingham Midshires board to add value to the society and its key stakeholders. That includes our members and our 2,000 employees".

They were scheduled to vote on the proposed deal at a special

general meeting in June and the takeover was expected to be completed in the early autumn.

Halifax said it intended to match the Royal Bank's existing timetable as far as possible.

Under the terms of the offer from RBS, Birmingham Midshires' 1.1 million savers and 130,000 borrowers each stood to collect windfalls worth up to £600.

The Save Our Building Societies (SOBS) campaign, which has opposed the RBS offer for undervaluing Birmingham Midshires, described the Halifax as "nothing better than an enormous carpetbagger".

Outlook, page 19

## Fund managers buy into mid cap stocks

UK fund managers have been buying heavily into FTSE 250 stocks, reflecting renewed confidence in the economy, according to the latest Merrill Lynch/Gallup industry survey, writes Lea

large FTSE 100 cousins. The growing sense that the UK economy may not be slowing so rapidly after all may help to explain why fund managers are at last paying more attention to these stocks.

Thirty-eight per cent of UK fund managers said they preferred FTSE 250 stocks to FTSE 100 stocks, compared with 15 per cent last month.

The decline in buying interest in UK equities as a whole - buyers of UK equities now outnumber sellers by just 3 per cent - indicates that UK fund managers are now happy with their cash levels.

## UK firms could afford £30bn buy-backs

BRITAIN'S biggest companies have enough firepower to finance £30bn worth of share buy-backs or acquisitions, according to a report published yesterday, writes Michael Harrison.

The latest analysis by the US investment bank Lehman Brothers estimates that Britain's 350 biggest non-financial companies could halve the cash in their balance sheets and still be less geared than their US counterparts. With the buy-back rage set to grow further this year, Lehman estimates that British Telecom could afford to return £5bn to share-

holders, and BP £600m. BTR last week announced a £2bn share buy-back.

The abolition of dividend tax credits has reduced the attractions of equity for tax-exempt UK funds while the phasing out of advanced corporation tax has made share buy-backs more tax efficient.

Lehman said reducing cash holdings by £30bn would raise the net debt to equity ratio from 0.4 to 0.6 per cent - a par with the European average but still well below the figure in the US.

Outlook, page 19

## Manufacturing nears recession as retail sales growth slows

By Diane Coyle  
Economics Editor

February to a level 9.5 per cent lower than a year ago and little higher than 10 years ago.

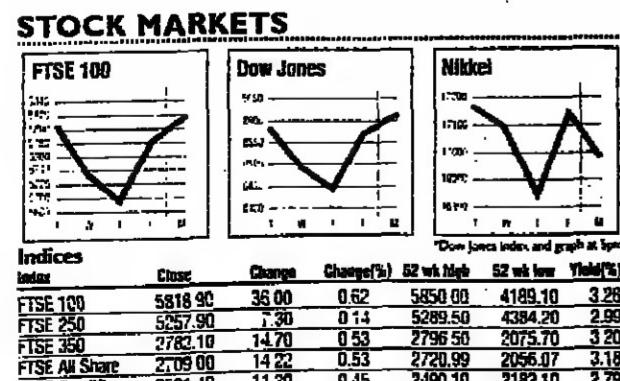
"Core" prices charged by manufacturers rose just 0.1 per cent. Their annual inflation rate, which edged down to 0.4 per cent, is the lowest since 1967.

Meanwhile, a survey indicated a sharp turnaround in the value of sales on the high street last month. The British Retail Consortium said total sales growth slowed from a buoyant 9.0 per cent in January to 6.6 per cent in February. The underlying trend was more buoyant, nearing its summer peak.

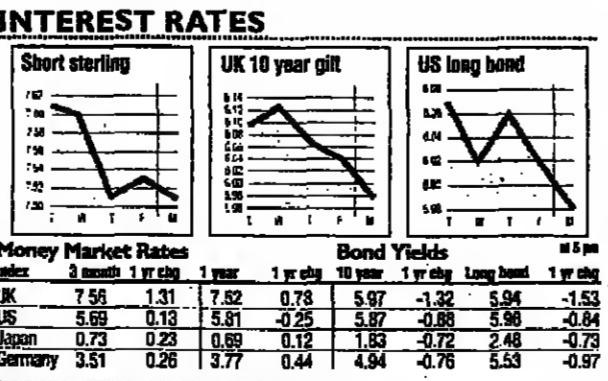
A new economic indicator published for the first time yesterday, a monthly estimate of GDP published by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, suggested growth had recovered slightly.

The new index, which has the merit of giving a broad assessment of the economy at more frequent intervals than the official GDP data, rose by 0.5 per cent in the three months to February, up from a low of 0.2 per cent in November, although still well below the 1.2 per cent three-month growth rates seen in July and August.

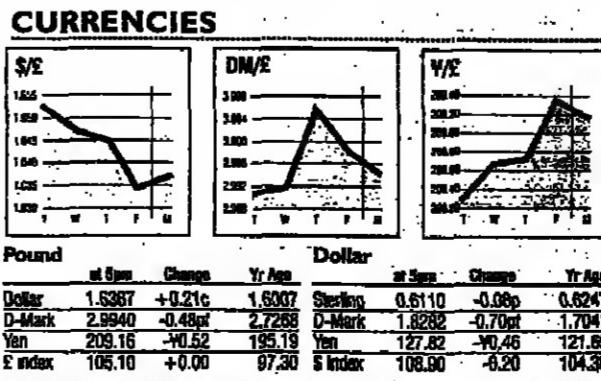
## STOCK MARKETS



## INTEREST RATES



## CURRENCIES



## OTHER INDICATORS

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Year
Indices	Close	Change	Change %	52 wk high
FTSE 100	5818.95	36.00	0.62	5850.00
FTSE 250	5267.90	7.30	0.14	5289.50
FTSE 350	2282.10	14.70	0.53	2296.50
FTSE All Share	2309.09	14.22	0.53	2270.99
FTSE SmallCap	1260.40	11.30	0.45	2490.10
FTSE AIM	1011.60	-0.70	-0.07	1135.50
Dow Jones	8611.73	-40.10	-0.47	8585.08
Nikkei	159.53	-159.44	-0.93	20910.79
Hang Seng	1098.06	71.56	0.68	15820.31
Dax	4780.83	64.88	1.38	4782.84

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## TOURIST RATES

	Australia (dollars)	Italy (lira)
Austria (schillings)	20.46	2.873
Belgium (francs)	60.06	207.54
Canada (\$)	2.2621	0.6299
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8476	3.765
Denmark (krone)	11.17	12.19
Finland (markka)	8.9006	295.63
France (francs)	9.7592	246.37
Germany (marks)	2.9229	7.818
Greece (drachma)	461.26	2.85
Hong Kong (\$)	12.28	367.03
Ireland (pounds)	1.1697	1.5979
USA (\$)		



## OUTLOOK ON COLLAPSE OF REED'S MERGER. HALIFAX'S BID FOR BIRMINGHAM MIDSHIRES AND THE DASH TO DISPOSE OF CASH

# Merger mania starts to run out of steam

IS MERGER mania turning to merger aversion? Well perhaps not quite yet. Too many City bonuses are riding on the present dash to consolidate – as well as some heady share price valuations. But for two of the present wave of giant mergers to turn to dust within the space of a couple of weeks begins to look eerily like a trend.

The backdrop to these two episodes is very different. With Glaxo and SmithKline, the story was about personal and cultural incompatibility; it was about different styles of management as much as who was going to run the show. With Reed Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer it was more to do with competition issues than anything else.

Reed was last night blaming Wolters, claiming it made unacceptable demands for a change in the terms of the deal. What really seems to have happened is Wolters began to believe the competition authorities were demanding too high a price in terms of asset disposals to make the deal worthwhile to its own shareholders. Attempting to renegotiate the terms with Reed may have been just a pretext for scrapping the deal.

So yes, these two mergers broke down for entirely different reasons. There is a theme here none the less.

Put at its most basic, the industrial case for consolidation is to build higher market share at lower cost. It wouldn't be wholly fair to depict this process as a cynical attempt to squeeze customers and employees for the benefit of shareholders. There's a bit more to it than that. But this is certainly a part of it – if only because the commercial pressures on companies are all the other way right now.

Globalisation, rapid advances in information technology, and greatly enhanced competition is destroying margin as never before, creating unprecedented pressure for cost cutting consolidation. Unfortunately, or perhaps happily depending on your point of view, the competition and management issues involved seem to be getting too big to handle.

### Market lessons for mutuals

MICHAEL JACKSON, chief executive of Birmingham Midshires building society, may well deserve the hard time he's getting from the press and others for agreeing a bid from Royal Bank of Scotland which now looks like a severe undervaluation. But there's another way of looking at it.

What about this proposition? When Birmingham Midshires agreed last August to takeover terms of between £605m and £630m, it signed a no-lose deal. At the time, the price looked reasonable when compared with other building society conversions, the existing Birmingham Midshires board was to be given complete autonomy within RBS, the brand would be preserved, and there was to be a three year guarantee to staff on job losses.

Mutually owned institutions are not like PLCs. When directors consider their fiduciary duties, they are obliged to act in the long-term interests of the society as a whole, including employees, not just the organisation's owners. The deal with RBS seemed to square the circle – a decent

windfall for the members and a guaranteed medium-term future for the society.

Since then, share prices among the converted building societies have risen 20-40 per cent and the RBS terms – at 12 times current earnings and 1.7 times book value – have begun to look poor set aside valuations of up to 19 times earnings and 3 times book for Halifax and its like.

OK, concedes Michael Jackson. If we're striking the deal today we would have gone for something higher. Few people anticipated these soaring share prices, and, in any case, there's nothing in the agreement with RBS to preclude Halifax or anyone else from tabling a higher bid if they want to. Just think what would have happened if share prices had gone the other way, if they had fallen rather than risen. Then the boot would be on the other foot. According to Birmingham Midshires, they far from cocking up the original negotiation, it has managed to put a floor under the price while at the same time leaving the door slightly ajar to others.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, RBS has a different interpretation. It believes it has a legally watertight lockout agreement with Midshires and that the Midshires board will not be able to consider Halifax's higher offer, far less recommend it.

We'll see. Part of the blame here lies with the cumbersome process of conversion. Unlike bids for publicly listed companies, which have to be completed within 90 days, building society conversions take an awfully long time – up to 18 months. If this takeover had happened when it was first announced, nobody would be grum-

bling. Nor would anyone be complaining if the terms had been fixed not in cash but in RBS shares, which have enjoyed the same ride as the converted building societies over the last nine months.

But perhaps the biggest lesson here is that there are no half-way houses between the utopianism of the mutual tradition and the slash and burn priorities of the joint stock company. Once the principle of mutuality is conceded, there's no turning back. Once the door is opened, the wolves will be in. It is probably not possible for a building society both to convert and have everything continue in the same cosy way as before, which was the intention of the RBS deal. However, Halifax needs to be a bit careful here. It too might find itself victim of the stock market's appetite for cost cutting consolidation.

### The dangers of too much debt

HALIFAX is another of those former building societies that has more cash than it knows what to do with. When it is not using up the surplus to bid for its erstwhile compatriots in the mutual movement, it is busy returning the stuff to shareholders by the barrel load. Odd really, when the whole idea behind conversion was supposed to have been to give building societies access to capital markets, not give the capital markets access to the cash built up over decades of mutual ownership.

Never mind. The mantra these days is balance sheet efficiency and Halifax is

intoning it along with everyone else. Greed is good but debt is better and woe betide the business which is under-leveraged. That is why share buy-backs are all the rage. What began as a trickle in 1996 and developed into a stream last year could easily become a torrent over the next few years. The latest estimate from Lehman Brothers, published yesterday, puts the amount of equity that could be "retired" this year, either through buy-backs or cash acquisitions, as high as £30bn.

There are some compelling reasons why repurchasing share capital is proving so popular. The abolition of dividend tax credits has made equity a less attractive investment for the tax-exempt funds. At the same time, the phasing out of advance corporation tax gives companies the opportunity to buy back capital without the risk of being left with ACT payments that they will never be able to offset against mainstream tax.

Buying back shares to reduce the cost of capital is one thing. The focus is now on how to leverage balance sheets further through direct substitution of debt for equity. If Lehman Brothers is right, UK PLC has plenty more scope. Reducing the cash holdings of the top 350 companies by a half would still only bring gearing levels up to the European average. They would still be a long way behind the hugely leveraged Americans. But everything, as they say, in moderation. Those American investment banks that are promoting the corporate debt market so heavily now have conveniently forgotten how it all ended in the nasty mess called Drexel Burnham Lambert a decade ago.

## Menzies' chief set for £1m pay-off in WHS deal

By Nigel Cope  
City Correspondent

The managing director of the John Menzies retail business is in line for a £1m pay-off following yesterday's agreement to sell the chain to WH Smith for £68m.

Steve Robinson, who has run Menzies' high street stores for four years, will leave the group when the deal has been completed. He is on a three year contract of around £170,000 which will entitle him to £50,000 compensation. How-

ever, it is understood that Menzies has agreed to double that figure in return for ensuring a smooth handover of the business to Smith's.

The lavish compensation seems certain to anger Menzies' shareholders and create another corporate governance row over boardroom pay.

David Mackay, John Menzies' chief executive, declined to confirm details of Mr Robinson's severance terms yesterday. He said the detail would be available in the company's next annual report. However, he

did pay tribute to Mr Robinson's role in improving the Menzies operation: "He has played a key role in bringing the business forward and he deserves some recognition for that."

Mr Robinson had been part of a management buy-in group that lost out to Smith's in the battle for Menzies. Under a £55m offer tabled by Alchemy, the venture capital group, Mr Robinson would have remained in charge of the stores and taken a stake in the business. Under the terms of yesterday's deal

the enlarged business will be run by Beverley Hodson, managing director of WH Smith Retail.

WH Smith said it had no plans to break up the Menzies chain. While it admitted that there would be some store closures and job losses, Smith's pledged to keep most of Menzies' 232 stores and retain the Menzies name in Scotland where it has 92 outlets. The remaining stores south of the border will be re-branded as WH Smith.

Richard Handover, chief executive of WH Smith, said the deal would enhance the

group's position both in Scotland and in railway stations and airports. "It is a good opportunity for us to get truly national coverage. We plan to keep the whole business ... we have bought it to grow it."

He said WH Smith had met the Menzies management last year but stressed that this was not about buying the retail chain but about the possibility of sharing certain functions such as IT systems in the distribution business.

WH Smith shares closed 10.5p to 503.5p. Menzies' rose 13p to 441.5p.

## Ryanair's \$2bn order aims to double size of fleet

By Michael Harrison

Ryanair, the low-cost Irish airline, yesterday unveiled plans to more than double the size of its fleet with a \$2bn (£1.2bn) order for new Boeing jets – the biggest in the carrier's 13-year history.

The new aircraft, due for delivery from 1999 onwards, will be used to expand Ryanair's route network as its steps up its operations in preparation for the launch of British Airways' own no-frills, low-cost carrier Go.

Ryanair, which floated on the Dublin and New York stock markets last year, is buying 25 Boeing 737-800 aircraft for use on its burgeoning European route network from Stansted airport. It has taken out options to buy a further 20 of the 189-seat aircraft.

Howard Millar, Ryanair's financial director, said the order would be financed partly through the airline's cash resources and partly through debt.

The aircraft will be delivered at a rate of five a year, enabling

Ryanair to hit its target of increasing capacity by 25 per cent a year. Last year it carried 4 million passengers with a fleet of 17 Boeing 737s and this year expects to carry 5 million. Six new routes in France, Italy and Sweden are being added to its 22 existing destinations this summer.

Mr Millar said Ryanair was in talks with 45 other airports about launching new routes. It is also in discussion with the Stock Exchange about a London listing but there were no plans for any equity issue.

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## Emerson removes Astec directors to gain board majority

By Peter Thal Larsen

EMERSON Electric, the US giant, yesterday carried out its threat to remove three executive directors from the board of Astec (BSR), the electronics group in which it holds a majority stake.

At an extraordinary general meeting, called by Emerson, the company used its 51 per cent shareholding in Astec to vote the finance director, Mike Arrowsmith, technical director Neal Stewart, and manufacturing director Mike Smith off the board.

The were replaced by three Emerson nominees - Stephen Cortinovis, Olivier Delage and Robert Staley. The three men, about whom no details were released, will become non-executive directors.

The move gives Emerson representatives a majority on the Astec board, allowing them to carry out their proposed policy of ceasing dividend payments by Astec.

The move was strongly criti-

cised by Brian Christopher, Astec's chairman, who said the removal of the three directors was "not in the interests of all shareholders".

Numerous institutional and private shareholders had flocked to the egn to voice their disapproval at Emerson's tactics. However, nobody from the US company showed up. Instead, it was represented by three lawyers from Norton Rose, Emerson's legal advisers, who voted the shares on the company's behalf.

Despite repeated interrogation from other shareholders, Emerson's representatives consistently refused to answer questions on the grounds that any answers they gave might be prejudicial to the court case that a number of institutional investors in Astec have launched against Emerson. The shareholders argue that Emerson has behaved with unfair prejudice against the minority shareholders, in contravention of

Rule 459 of the Companies Act.

A judge is expected to rule this week whether the legal action, which was lodged with the court last week, can proceed. Peter Marshall, one of Astec's independent directors, criticised the lack of Emerson representatives. "The dominant shareholder should send someone. They haven't answered a single question or offered any words of explanation," he said.

The meeting started with the institutional shareholders in Astec calling for an adjournment on the grounds that not enough information had been supplied about the new directors. But that move was defeated following a vote.

Shareholders and directors were equally bewildered by the legal technicalities of Emerson's unprecedented proposals. "I think we're all breaking new ground on the legal side," Mr Christopher said in response to one shareholder's question.



THE COST of introducing a new model of London taxi depressed profits at Manganese Bronze, the cab manufacturer said yesterday. The group, which also makes a range of metal powders and components, said pre-tax profits of £1.4m for the six months to 31 January included an exceptional cost of £2.5m for introducing the TX1, to replace

the conventional model (above). The group made £4.1m in the same period a year ago. Jamie Borwick, the chief executive, said: 'The launch of our new taxi was by far the biggest event in our recent history. The market reception has exceeded all our expectations and we are now producing the TX1 at a higher rate than we have ever made taxis before.'

## Death of BSkyB chief set to prompt fresh shake-up at critical time

By Terry Macalister

British Sky Broadcasting faces further upheaval among its top management at a critical time for the satellite broadcaster following the sudden death of Nick Carrington, the group's chief financial officer.

The company, controlled by Rupert Murdoch, is in the middle of switching from analogue to digital broadcast technology

and hopes to launch a version of the new service within three months.

Mr Carrington, who was aged 47, died on Friday night after a short illness. He had only been in the top financial position since the turn of the year.

He took over from Richard Brooke who left in November quickly followed by BSkyB's chief executive and managing director, Sam Chisholm, plus

the deputy managing director, David Chance.

The official reason for the de-

partures was that senior executives did not want the extra responsibility that would come from launching the latest phase of BSkyB development. But there were also reports of differences of opinion about the way forward.

More recently, there has been speculation that the BSkyB could lose Gerry Robinson, its chair-

man, because he holds the equivalent position at Granada, which has its own digital broad-

casting interests.

Granada, which controls an 11

per cent stake in BSkyB, has been

increasingly active with its partner, Carlton Communications, in British Digital Broadcasting.

Analysts said the latest up-

heave at BSkyB comes at the worst possible time. Mr Carrington's death could create a

vacuum at the executive level", warned Paul Richards, media analyst with Panmure Gordon.

"He [Mr Carrington] was a key member of the management team and no replacement comes to mind."

A BSkyB spokesman said it

was too early to say who would

replace the financial director,

who was working a second stint

at the pay-TV broadcaster.

He had been deputy director

of finance from 1989 to 1991 but

left to join Polygram before re-

turning to BSkyB in 1995. Mark

Booth, BSkyB's chief executive

said Carrington's death was "a

tragic loss". He said: "Nick had an

incredible knowledge of

BSkyB and was a strong presence

during two key periods in the

company's history. He will be

missed very much by all of us."

BSkyB has traditionally built

its support around sports pro-

grammes but increased competi-

tion has encouraged it to invest

in made-for-television films.

It was a row between BSkyB

and Carlton over the proposed

acquisition of Premier football

rights for digital channels that

caused the conflict - and legal

wraps to fly - between the two.

Shares in BSkyB, which is 40

percent owned by Mr Murdoch's

News Corporation, rose 6.5p to

433p yesterday.

Ottakar float to net £6m paper profit for founder

By Nigel Cole  
City Correspondent

OTTAKAR's, the chain of 47 bookstores, is planning a stock market flotation next month that will value the group at around £30m. The company is raising £20m via an institutional placing and plans to invest the funds in new stores openings.

The float will mean a paper profit of £6m for founder James Heneage, who started Ottakar's with a single store in Brighton 10 years ago. He owns 20 per cent of the company.

However, analysts speculated that Ottakar's might be snapped up by a trade buyer before it comes to market. Books etc was acquired by Borders, the US bookstore, for £40m last September just ahead of its stock market debut. Other US book sellers, including Barnes & Noble, are still interested in entering the UK market and Ottakar's would make an easily digestible bite for a larger group.

However, Mr Heneage, Ottakar's founder said: "We have had no approaches in the last six months."

Ottakar's has grown quickly by concentrating on smaller towns rather than battling against Dillons and Waterstone's in the big cities. The company has identified 120 further locations where it believes its stores could be opened. It plans 15 new stores a year over the next two years.

Ottakar's recorded pre-tax profits of £1.2m on turnover of £23.7m last year. It is floating to enable its venture capital backers to realise part of their investment. Foreign & Colonial controls 70 per cent of the company.

## Mirror looks for new acquisitions to boost growth

MIRROR Group, the newspaper and television company, said yesterday it was interested in making bolt-on acquisitions to boost its growth, particularly in its magazines and exhibitions business.

"There is still plenty of room for seeking out possible acquisitions or disposals," John Allwood, the finance director, said after the company reported annual results. Mirror said underlying pre-tax profits rose 12 per cent to £92m boosted by growth at its regional and national newspaper operations, in line with analysts' forecasts of £89.94m.

Although Mr Allwood said Mirror was interested in making further acquisitions, he added that the company also had strong organic growth prospects. He said the size of any acquisition would be limited by the company's gearing level of 89 per cent after last year's £300m acquisition of regional group Midland Independent Newspapers.

But the group declined to comment on reports that it plans to sell its 46 per cent stake in Newspaper Publishing, owner of *The Independent* and *Independent on Sunday*, to Independent Newspapers, the Irish media company that also has a 46 per cent stake.

David Montgomery, the chief executive, attributed the profit rise to strong results at *The Mirror* and *Midland Independent*, as well as increased trading

### THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

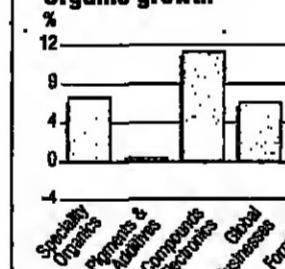
EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

#### Laporte: At a glance

Market value: £1.4, share price 741p (+7.5p)

Five-year record	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Turnover (£bn)	0.88	0.96	1.07	1.06	0.83
Pre-tax profits (£m)	107	125	125	125	125
Earnings per share (p)	41.4	46.1	48.2	46.9	18.6
Dividends per share (p)	20.2	22.4	23.0	24.3	25.3

#### Organic growth %



#### Exciting changes afoot at Laporte

PERHAPS it is telling that only three journalists turned up for the press conference at Laporte. It is regarded by many in the City as just another boring company in a bombed out chemicals sector that has felt the full impact of the strong pound. The recent takeover of rival Allied Colloids provided a brief flutter of bid interest across the sector, but the argument goes that the long-term prospects for an over-supplied industry are hardly inspiring.

Laporte's share price performance certainly tallies with this view. The company has underperformed the market and the sector dramatically over the last five years. But, despite first impressions, interesting things are afoot at Laporte, which should produce an exciting chemical reaction.

In his two years in charge Jim Long, Laporte's chief executive, has led the group's remittance by selling a third of the business, approaching half of its sites and shed 2,000 workers. These reforms helped underlying profits rise 12 per cent to £132m in 1997, and saw the group beat its target of 15 per cent margins and a 25 per cent return on capital employed.

Impressive figures, and Laporte has impressive ambitions: to double the sales at its specialty and chemicals and electronics divisions over the next five years, to raise margins to a heady 17.5 per cent and return on capital to 27.5 per cent.

To do it Laporte will have to prove it can concentrate on profitable niches within a tough sector now most of its restructuring programme is complete. For example, its business supplying the pharmaceutical industry is growing rapidly.

And coloured concrete is going down a storm in California, aiding pigment sales.

There are still some areas of concern. Although the group achieved organic growth of 5 per cent last year, the formulated products division is under-achieving. The slowdown in Asia may also have a knock-on effect on sales.

However, the positives outweigh the

negatives and, with a fair wind, Laporte's goals are in reach. The group's strong finances also give it the firepower to launch a sizeable acquisition of, say, £500m.

Laporte's stock rose 17.5p to 741p yesterday. Analysts forecast current year pre-tax profits rising to £139m, putting the shares on a prospective p/e ratio of 14. After a sharp rise in its price, Laporte looks less of a bargain than it did at the start of the year. However, there is still scope for further improvement. Good value.

#### IMI bashes out the goods for Pepsi

AT FIRST GLANCE it is not easy to see what Midlands metal basher, Gary Allen, has in common with the Spice Girls. But both are heavily involved with Pepsi. While the singers provide advertising jingles, IMI's IMI group produces drinks dispensers and good business it is too.

Out of IMI's 1997 sales of £1.43bn, 10 per cent now comes from Pepsi, Coca-Cola and McDonald's. Sustained demand from the US for the engineering company's products helped drive up sales by 12 per cent in 1997. Overall group profits before tax and exceptional items rose 7 per cent to £146.5m but the strong pound meant IMI missed out on a further £20m on the bottom line. IMI's basic pre-tax profits fell from £161.1m to £148.9m but the 1996 figure was distorted by £26m of exceptional gains.

An attempt to counter the strong pound put £7m worth of restructuring costs through last year and this will be repeated in 1998 as overheads are hacked back.

Out of IMI's four core areas: building products, drinks dispense, fluid power and special engineering, the latter has been taking the biggest knocks. IMI closed its Yorkshire Alloys subsidiary and further assets in this area are earmarked for disposal.

But IMI has also been protecting itself with acquisitions and says this strategy will be continued in the second

half of this year. The US and continental Europe are the more favoured regions at present.

Last year IMI beefed up its foreign presence, buying the Swiss-based industrial valve operations of Suizer. It also bought plumbing products group TA Hydraulics of Sweden, and Wilshire Corporation of the US.

It's remarkable to think back 20 years to when IMI was spun off from ICI. In those days 85 per cent of IMI's business came from the UK, now it is 30 per cent.

IMI is doing all the right things. Even with the home economy tipped to slow further, analysts expect IMI will make around £160m pre-tax profits this year. That would put the company, whose shares rose 8.5p to 456p yesterday, on a multiple of 15 times in line with the sector. The stock is worth holding on to.

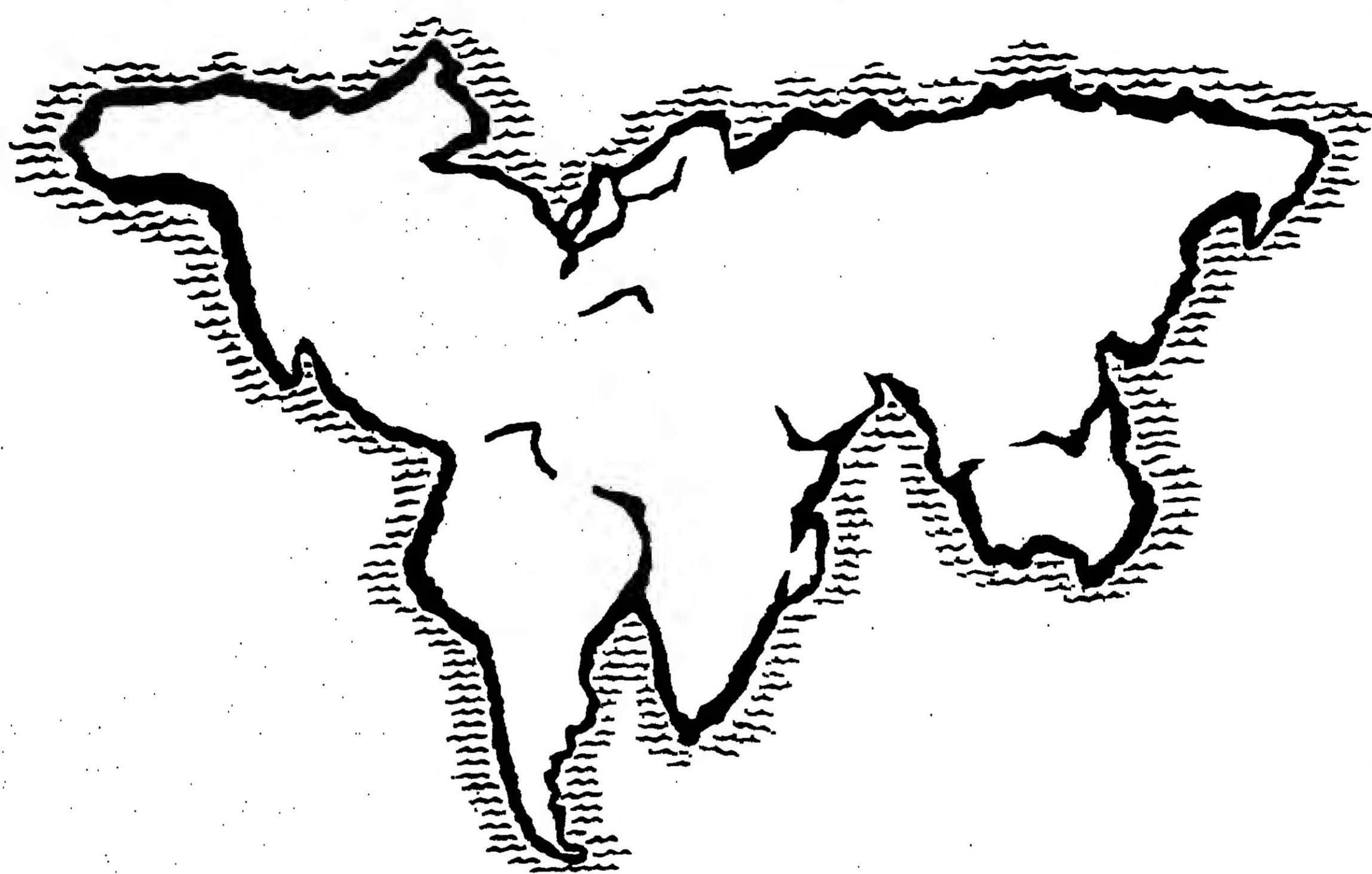
#### Hodder books a 24% rise in profits

HERE'S an ironic story. Thrusting chief executive of a publishing company leads campaign to break price-fixing in stony industry. Despite vociferous opposition his efforts succeed, and three years on industry experts estimate the move has expanded the market by as much as 11 per cent. However, the spoils go elsewhere, the company stumbles and is forced to issue a profit warning and, over the same three-year period, the company's share price loses a quarter of their value.

That's the story of Tim Hely-Hutchinson, chief executive of Hodder Headline, who is still trying to convince the City that the 1995 warning was just a blip. Yesterday's solid 1997 results, showing pre-tax profits rising 24 per cent to £8.2m on a 6 per cent rise in comparable sales, will have offered some reassurance.

Although the number of new titles published slipped slightly, operating margins widened by more than a percentage point to 9.2 per cent as Hodder improved what Mr

مكتاب من الارض



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## Compass and Misys bid for Footsie membership

### MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

**COMPASS**, the contract caterer, and Misys, the computer group, are neck and neck in a battle for membership of the exclusive Footsie club.

As the stock market closed Misys, with a 5p gain to 2,682.5p, managed to open up a marginal lead with Compass off 2p at 915p. One, possibly both, will join the blue-chip index. In third spot but unlikely to force its way into contention is Northern Rock, the mortgage bank, little changed at 610p.

The catering/computing battle is too close to call. Today's closing prices provide the basis for the crucial calculations which will be presented to the Footsie steering committee when it meets tomorrow.

Compass and Misys have enjoyed remarkable runs. The catering group, which has expanded aggressively through acquisitions, has been as low as 582.5p. The shares have moved ahead strongly this

year, drawing some support from rumours of a takeover bid from Renold Initial, but are 15p below their peak. Misys shares have climbed from a 1,115p low and are 65p below their high.

Dixons, the electrical retailer which has shown a fuse since it became apparent festive sales would disappoint, will almost certainly be relegated. From 720p in November the shares are bumping along at a 12 month low of 512p.

It is now valued at £2.2bn with Compass and Misys both above £2.9bn. Rank, the leisure group little changed at 332p, is another possible casualty.

Footsie ended just a whisker below its peak, climbing 36 points to 5,818.9 in what was a rather featureless session. Supporting shares also made headway with the small-cap index breaking through 2,500 points for the first time.

BTIR, once a conglomerate now an engineer, continued its revival, gaining 20p to 210p and topping the blue chip leader board. Williams, another to flee the now unglamorous conglomerate pack and move into

the security and fire alarms bracket, also gain 20p, reaching 388p. Figures are due today. Profits could approach £290m against £248m. But some of the gain was due to speculation it could accompany the results with the sale of its Nu-Tone US building materials business for £140m.

Reed and Pearson offered contrasting media displays. Pearson jumped 49p to 992p in further response to Friday's sale of the troublesome Mindscape business. Since the disposal the shares have risen 73p. Deutsche Morgan Grenfell announced a 1,130p target

Red International nudged 57p to 620p after the planned £17.5bn merger with Dutch publisher Wolters Kluwer was called off.

Financials had a relatively

quiet session although Legal & General, the insurer, jumped 32p to 697p as takeover rumours returned.

Halifax, which has barged into the Birmingham Midshires takeover with a £780m offer, fell 12p to 925p. The BM building society has agreed a £630m bid from the Royal Bank of Scotland.

Close Brothers, the merchant bank, rose 45p to 726.5p. Interim figures impressed but there is also a sneaking suspicion the group will soon be the subject of a takeover strike. Norwich Union, figures to-

day, overcame an early 14p fall to close 17p (after 32p) higher at 515p.

British Energy surged 23p to 454p after forecasting its profits would be "at least" £160m and not the £125m the market expected. The higher-than-expected profits are due to the way fuel prices have held up and time costs have been kept under control.

Asda jumped 8.5p to 197p on speculation the Safeway bid will come from J Sainsbury. Sainsbury rose 4p to 378.5p; Sainsbury's gained 10p to 450p.

Drug group SkyePharma, figures on Thursday, gained 7p to 80p following positive comments from SBC Warburg.

Builder Tilbury Douglas added 10p to 235p following a £15m water contract. Figures are due on Thursday and around £22.5m is expected against £19m.

On Ofex, Advance Digital Communications climbed to 29.5p from its 20p placing price.

### TAKING STOCK

PolyDoc, an information management company with share presence on AIM and in Amsterdam, is having a remarkable run. Up 50p on Friday the shares climbed a further 37.5p to 232.5p. Year's figures are due soon and there are hopes the group will produce a maiden profit.

Sell chemical group Hickson International, suggests Sutherlands, the stockbroker. Analysts Martin Evans and Catherine Haynes say: "Off skid now but still in the clinic, Hickson is only in early recovery." The shares are 85p.

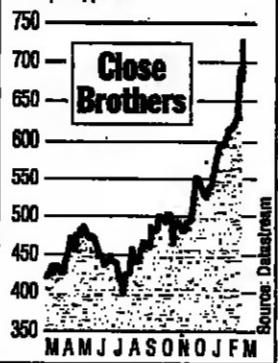
Food group John Lasty rose 1.5p, equaling its 11.25p year's high. It has launched a breakfast cereal which is said to have been well received.

Teather & Greenwood expect profits of £1.9m (£753,000).

Abacus Polar, an electrical component distributor, rose 10p to 136.5p after forging an alliance with a German group. The two will have a £230m turnover.

### Share spotlight

share price, pence



Source: Bloomberg

### High Low Stock

Price Ctg Yd P/E Code

Alcoholic Beverages

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# His Song sets Irish standard

By Richard Edmondson

WHEN the great tumult goes up next Tuesday to announce the first race of the Cheltenham Festival most of the crooners will be united by one horse, one tune: His Song.

The eponymous elephantine gelding is the beast expected to give the Irish contingent spending money for the rest of the week in the Supreme Novices' Hurdle. If the chestnut does so, glasses will be raised to the 31st Irish winner of the Festival's opening race.

The mental stepping stones suggest His Song must win. At Leopardsfoot recently he went down by just a length and a half to the Champion Hurdle favourite, Istabraq. QED.

Among the few that did not get carried away that day, how-

ever, was the chestnut's trainer, Michael "Mouse" Morris. "He jumped well and did everything that was asked of him and he did run the favourite for the Champion Hurdle to a length and a half," Morris said yesterday. "No matter what way you like it at, it was a good run but it might have been a flattery or two. Three out they took a pull and they slowed up half-way along the back."

His Song is an extremely likeable horse. He is physically imposing and prepared by a figure who is helpful even by Irish standards.

Whatever happens next week, His Song is destined for even greater things. "Anything he does now is a bonus and he's done the business now for a novice before going over fences," Morris said. "It's very early days,

and there's no doubt he is a very special horse. He certainly has all the attributes, but whether he turns out to be a great horse is another day's work."

Morris knows the way to Cheltenham by now. He has won races at the Festival both as jockey and trainer, though those experiences do not appear

**RICHARD EDMONDSON**  
NAP: Sallinger  
(Sedgefield 2.00)  
NB: The Brewer  
(Exeter 4.50)

to have dulled his anticipation for the conflict. "Christ I get excited about Cheltenham," he said. "It's a great meeting. It's the place."

It will, however, be an elusive pair for two well-regarded athletes in the Champion

Hurdle. Collier Bay and Grey Shot have had their supporters to illness like just about every other inmate at Jim Old's Wiltshire stable. "He is not all right and will not run in the Champion Hurdle," the trainer said yesterday. "In fact, I won't have any runners at the Festival."

Old likes to pretend he is unlucky but on this occasion he has no need to be a Thespian. Nine horses from Upper Herdwick Farm were meant to be at the crucible, but now the only Old will feel is in their foreheads. "The horses are completely wiped out and only three of the 45 have not got what seems to be like 48-hour fits," the train-

er said. "It went round the yard within 10 days and there is no way any of them are going to Cheltenham. We have been very lucky this year, totally bug-free, and then suddenly whom."

Grey Shot's abrupt moment occurred on the Kingstars gallop, an accident which removes the 20-1 shot from calculations. "X-rays have shown there is no long-term problem, but he may have a rest and won't run over hurdles again this season," Ian Balding, the grey's trainer, said.

Grey Shot's absence means that Richard Dunwoody, who deserted the Jockey Club Cup winner for I'm Supposin in the Champion, can sleep a little easier in his bunk bed. Dunwoody has collected such an array of mounts for his Prestbury Park portfolio that Coral make him a short-priced favourite in win



Dunwoody: favourite jockey

the honour of being the meeting's top jockey.

Tony McCoy is second favourite, while Adrian Maguire is 9-2 to take the crown. Considering his recent Cheltenham fortune (Maguire has missed the last three Festivals) he should be that price just to get inside the Cheltenham ring road.

LONDON CLUBS TROPHY (Cheltenham Festival top jockey): Coral: 7-4 Richard Dunwoody, 4-1 Tony McCoy, 8-2 Adrian Maguire & Charlie Sturt, 8-1 Paul Nicholls, 10-1 Mark Newland, 12-1 Alan Farnell & Carl Llewellyn, 23-1 Tony Dobbin, 40-1 Thierry Dounen & Andrew Thornton.

## Racing's futures market

By Ian Davies

Facts is 8-1 with William Hill - Ladbrokes go just 4-1 - while Escartegue, who might run in the Gold Cup instead, is 7-1 with William Hill - Ladbrokes offer just 4-1.

Darapour is 16-1 with the tote for the Triumph Hurdle - Coral go 10-1 - while Paddy's Return is 3-1 with William Hill for the Stayers' Hurdle - the tote go 2-1.

In the Royal &amp; SunAlliance (Novices') Chase, Fiddling The

Tote go 2-1.

### Aride Trophy (Novices') Chase (2m)

Horse (Trainer)	Coral	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Total
Champions (P. O'Neill)	8-2	7-1	8-1	8-1
Direct Route (J.H. Johnson)	8-1	7-1	7-1	7-1
Kachoo (F. Doherty)	8-1	6-1	7-1	7-1
Estebanez De Morin (G. Richardson)	7-1	7-1	5-1	5-1
White Rose (M. H. Kingfisher)	7-1	7-1	8-1	8-1
Latin Kathie (P. Nichols)	10-1	10-1	8-1	8-1
Classy Lad (A. Horobin)	16-1	16-1	doubtful	16-1
Queen Of Spades (P. Twiston-Davies)	12-1	14-1	20-1	14-1

Each-way a quarter the odds, places, 1, 2, 3 (Cheltenham, Tuesday, 17 March)

### Champion Hurdle (2m 110yds)

Horse (Trainer)	Coral	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Total
Intention (P. O'Neill)	8-1	3-1	7-1	7-1
Date Star (J. M. Jefferson)	8-1	5-1	5-1	5-1
Shadow Leader (C. Egerton)	8-1	5-1	5-1	5-1
Friendly Holly (F. Murphy)	14-1	14-1	18-1	14-1
Gelone (C. Pocher)	20-1	16-1	18-1	15-1
Potash (P. Nichols)	20-1	20-1	20-1	20-1
Kenned (A. Twiston-Davies)	15-1	25-1	20-1	20-1
Admiral (A. Horobin)	22-1	20-1	25-1	25-1
Summertime (D. Nicholson)	20-1	25-1	25-1	25-1

Each-way a quarter the odds, places, 1, 2, 3 (Cheltenham, Tuesday, 17 March) - with it on

### Queen Mother Champion Chase (2m)

Horse (Trainer)	Coral	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Total
Barry Jane (P. O'Neill)	8-1	8-1	8-1	8-1
Shazzan (P. Nichols)	8-1	10-10	4-1	4-1
One Man (G. Richards)	4-1	9-1	4-1	4-1
Viking Phoenix (D. Nicholson)	8-1	5-1	5-1	5-1
Or Royal (M. Pipe)	7-1	7-1	7-1	6-1
Colgate (C. Moncrieff)	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1
Lord Dunbar (A. Charlton)	25-1	40-1	33-1	30-1
Flying Inns (F. Murphy)	100-1	40-1	50-1	50-1
Green Green Desert (O. Sherwood)	100-1	65-1	65-1	65-1
Inland Jockey (M. Pipe)	100-1	65-1	65-1	65-1
Lightning Lad (J. King)	100-1	65-1	100-1	100-1
Seek The Fall (A. Shapcott)	100-1	60-1	65-1	65-1

Each-way a quarter the odds, places, 1, 2, 3 (Cheltenham, Tuesday, 17 March)

### Fallon wanted for Change

Kieren Fallon, the champion jockey, could team up again with Major Change in the first running of the Teletext Winter Derby at Lingfield on 21 March.

Fallon was successful on the

Gay Kelleway-trained horse

when it won the City and Suburban Handicap at Epsom last year. "Kieren gets on well with the horse," the trainer said, "and the Winter Derby is the ideal race for Major Change. It's his trip and he'll like the surface."

Fallon had to give up the

City and Suburban Handicap when he won the Winter Derby at Lingfield in November.

Major Change has won four of his last five starts since he was beaten in the Winter Derby at Lingfield in November.

He has won the Winter Derby at Lingfield twice, in 1992 and 1993.

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## England's schedule would have exhausted Casanova himself



ALAN  
WATKINS  
ON  
RUGBY

FOR a long time now I have been expressing the opinion every month or so, that the Five Nations' Championship is not only the greatest rugby event but also the finest sporting occasion in the world. The relative change in the position of England and Wales, which I wrote about last week, has done nothing to alter this view.

The idea that there should be some First or (as it would now no doubt be called) Super or Premier division, consisting of Australia, England, France, New Zealand and South Africa, is so much pie in the sky. It is not even a specially appealing pie, and I will tell you why.

Such a competition would

reproduce almost precisely the supposed failings of the Five Nations. That is to say, New Zealand and South Africa would find themselves in the position of England and France. These last two would resemble Ireland and Scotland. While Australia would be bobbing about somewhere in the middle, much as Wales are in the Five Nations as at present constituted.

Most of the silly talk has disappeared in the wake of last Saturday's matches. But it will resurface above the waves, mark my words, when France, England or both next heavily defeat the Celtic nations, as they are now called – though, if you

want to be accurate about these matters, all three countries contain ancient elements which are not Celtic at all. They are shortly to be joined by Italy, who will have to rank as honorary Celts.

Most of the talk has come from England rather than from France. There is little doubt that it is chiefly motivated by greed: by the possibility of even more lucrative deals with Rupert Murdoch's Sky television. But what happens when England are relegated, and Ireland, Scotland, Wales or even Italy promoted?

Would Murdoch be quite so keen to transmit inferior matches? And what happens if he loses interest altogether in rugby,

which, like cricket, is being transmitted as bait to hook the middle classes?

There is no doubt, however, that such a two-tier system of world rugby would be possible logically, on account of the relative speed of modern transport. Some years ago, again – with Ken Jones I am the longest-serving columnist in the whole of this great newspaper – I wrote a column saying that rugby football had yet to come to terms with the invention of the jet engine.

The point I was trying to make was that large aircraft were quite capable of transporting entire rugby squads

ends of the earth, and that consequently the era of the lengthy tour was dead. In particular there was no need to spend months in Australasia.

After the lapse of a decade or so, the rugby authorities finally caught up with the march of science. Indeed, in their enthusiasm for single-match encounters they resembled last autumn a maiden aunt who in middle age had suddenly discovered the joys of sex. The schedule for England players, who had a tough Five Nations in front of them, would have exhausted Casanova himself.

Now Clive Woodward, the England coach, is set to compound the errors of the autumn

clubs that under International Board rules they must put country first. Only High Court judge, I am afraid, can resolve that. Reluctant though I am to hand over money to the gentlemen in wigs, I hope a judge does pronounce.

I now look forward to a season of upsets, with England losing to Scotland and Ireland, and France to Wales. For Ireland v Wales in Dublin I shall be intellectually neutral although emotionally committed. But I shall not shed any tears if Wales lose. On their performance in Paris, Ireland certainly deserve to emerge from this Five Nations with at least one win and perhaps two.

## Lucic joins the youth revolution

John Roberts on tennis' latest prodigy, who reached the ripe old age of 16 yesterday

ONE OF the first questions rising tennis stars are asked concerns their introduction to the sport. Steffi Graf's father shortened the handle of one of his rackets for her; Monica Seles' cartoonist father drew Tom and Jerry on the tennis halls; Martina Hingis' mother practically handed her daughter a racket at birth and named her after the great Navratilova.

Mirjana Lucic was four years old when she hid on the back seat of the family car as her father took her older sister, Ana, for a tennis lesson at a local club in the Croatian seaside town of Makarska. Mirjana sneaked on the court. "When I took the racket, I wouldn't let it go," she said.

Her grip has been loosened from time to time by the WTA Tour's age eligibility rule, which restricts the number of tournaments accessible to players under 18. Having marked her 16th birthday yesterday, Lucic is entitled to increase her activity from eight to 10 WTA Tour events (starting with the Lipton Championships in Florida on 19 March), plus the year-end championships and any of the four Grand Slam tournaments for which she gains direct entry by virtue of her world ranking. At the age of 17, she will be eligible to play 13 WTA Tour events.

Lucic's father, Marinko, a former Olympic decathlete, considers that his daughter has been penalised by the rule. He was particularly upset when Mirjana was not given wild cards for the French Open (won by her compatriot, Iva Majoli, 19) and Wimbledon (won by Hingis, 16).

If time has been allowed to pass his daughter by, it has done so fleetingly. The latest addition to the WTA Tour's attractive and varied cast of teenagers – Hingis, with the big smile and stunningly mature game; Anna Kournikova, every ball-boy's dream; and the Williams-sisters, Venus and Serena, winning with attitude – Lucic is accustomed to appraisal. Almost off-tall, blonde, blessed with an aggressive baseline game and the strength and timing to serve



Blonde ambition: Croatia's Mirjana Lucic has the style and game to challenge the best in the women's game

consistently in excess of 100 mph, she commands attention.

Her arrival on the WTA Tour was spectacular. Unranked, and a qualifier, she became the first player ever to win a professional tournament on her debut, appropriately at the Croatian Open last May. Lucic did not drop a set, and in the semi-finals defeated Amanda Coetzer, the diminutive South African who had eliminated Steffi Graf at the 1997 Australian Open and was soon to beat the German again at the French Open. "Mirjana is an incredible girl," Coetzer said. "She beat me in everything I was trying."

In her second event on the major tour, in mid-May, still unranked and having qualified for the main draw in Strasbourg, Lucic defeated two seeds, Judith Wiesner and Nathalie Tauzat, before losing to Graf, her idol, in the final, 6-2, 7-5. Afterwards, Graf told Lucic she had a great future and informed reporters, "I was not nearly as good as she is at 15".

Graf, who joined the tour at the age of 13 after outclassing the junior competition, graduated steadily through the senior ranks, by current standards, moving into the world's top 10 during her third season. It was the American Jennifer Capriati's prodigious leap from the juniors to a Grand Slam semi-final at 14, and her subsequent emotional turmoil, that prompted the tennis administrators to address age eligibility.

On 1 July, having competed in her third professional tournament, advancing to the final of a satellite event in Marcellin, Lucic qualified for a world ranking, No. 69. That persuaded the United States Tennis Association to accept her entry for the US Open singles draw of 128.

Confident of performing well when able to trust the even bounce of the balls on medium-pace concrete (she won the 1996 US Open junior singles championship and the 1997 Australian Open junior singles and doubles titles), Lucic marked her Grand Slam debut by advancing to the third

round at Flushing Meadow, elevating her ranking to No. 50. She was defeated in three sets by Jana Novotna, the No. 3 seed, who concluded that, "Lu-

cic hits the ball harder than anyone."

Last May, Lucic received an invitation to Switzerland the moment Hingis was fit to prac-

tise after surgery to repair a knee damaged in a fall from a horse. It was not the first time that the young Croat had visited Trubek to play with Hingis

since friends after meeting at the Fed Cup in Spain in April 1996, and Lucic is valued both as a companion and a powerful sparing partner.

In Novotna's absence at the Australian Open two months ago, Hingis invited Lucic to partner her in the doubles.

They won the title, a victory which made amends for Lucic's second-round defeat in the singles by Majoli, the No. 4 seed.

"Tennis-wise, Mirjana is one of the biggest threats to Martina," said Melanie Molitor, Hingis' mother and coach, qualifying the compliment, perhaps

on the rubberised concrete court at the world No. 1's home (the "Rebound Ace" is a replica of the surface at the Australian Open). The youngsters

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Photograph: Reuters

with a future rivalry in mind, by adding, "but maybe not mentally."

Marinko Lucic, who has four other children, resents any suggestion that he is an opportunist, having sold a restaurant and three grocery stores in order to concentrate on supervising Mirjana's career. "She'll be No. 1 in the world some day; if God allows it, but we've learned from the mistakes of the others," he told the *New York Times*.

"They looked too much at the money. Yes, it's a business, but the focus should be on the game, and the money will come later if you do this correctly. I wish that my daughter doesn't play past 25. I want her to get friends, get married, and have a life. We don't want to lose perspective." Amen to that.

## Honda plans return to Formula One

HONDA said yesterday it had decided to return to Formula One racing with a comprehensive team using its own engine, chassis and management.

Honda has begun a feasibility study on its return to Formula One after withdrawing from the sport in late 1992. "It was the strong determination of our young engineers that prompted Honda to start its serious consideration of returning to F1 racing," Nobuhiko Kawamoto, Honda's president and chief executive officer, said.

Kawamoto added that the timing of the return would be finalised by the end of this year. "The team structure, management and actual timing of the return to racing have still to be fixed," he said. "We decided to return to Formula One by not only making engines, but also by developing and making car chassis and handling the management of our own racing team."

Honda's approach will be similar to that of Ferrari, which manages its own team and develops and makes its own engines and chassis. Other major car manufacturers now in Formula One supply engines to independent racing teams.

Honda took part in Formula One racing as a team between 1964 and 1968, winning two victories out of 35 races. The company was involved in Formula One from 1983 to 1992 as an engine supplier, winning 65 times in 151 races.

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ANDORRA	47°	57°	57°	57°	57°	57°
Edo	New snow everywhere	100%	95%	55	90	Light snow
AUSTRIA						
Nestrau	Wet snow at afternoon	10%	15%	0	40	Cloudy showers
BULGARIA	Scattered	Strong wind to upper slopes	40%	24.03	0	35
CANADA	Tremblant	Firm packed conditions	95%	05.03	15	180 Cloudy/light
FRANCE	Les Orres	Good snow at altitude	100%	09.03	60	160 Overcast
ITALY	Cortina d'Ampezzo	Upper slopes still good	100%	15.02	70	150 Less cold/light
NORWAY	Gjøvik	Fresh snow on high-packed slope	95%	04.03	50	50-140 Cloudy/light
SPAIN	Fuengirola	New snow down to al level	95%	09.03	25	140 Unsettled
SWITZERLAND	Lavaux	Spring-like snow conditions	75%	05.03	0	55 Cloudy
UNITED STATES	Glacier Valley	Packed groomed powder	100%	08.03	300	550 Sunny spells

Snow Reports supplied by SM Helpline

## Varsity veteran Meredith makes it six

### Hockey

By Peter Colwell

WHEN Mike Meredith, the Cambridge University captain steps on to the pitch today at the National Stadium in Milton Keynes for the 98th Varsity match, it will be his sixth appearance in this annual event.

Meredith, who won three

Blues for Oxford, before switching allegiance, has from a hernia and has not played a full match since November. Although he is in the starting line-up, he is an integral part of Cambridge's penalty corner routine.

Cambridge, surprise winners last year, have had their best ever season in the Adams East League, finishing second and going into today's match with

the confidence gained from a recent good spell which finished with a 4-3 win against East Anglia and a 4-2 victory over Ipswich in their first league match.

Oxford, 13th in the First Division of the National League,

have two players, Tom Matthews and the captain, Rewick Irvine, who played for England in the Under-21 World Cup at Milton Keynes.

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Denotes Blue

## Dong the latest big name to pull out of All-England event

### Badminton

champion, of course, but it will not detract from the event."

The world champion, Peter Rasmussen of Denmark, withdrew on Sunday with an ankle injury. Dong is the third seeded player to pull out in the past few days, after Rasmussen and his Danish team mate, Thomas Stuer-Lauridsen.

Some Asian countries have

sent smaller squads to this year's championships because of financial hardship, but officials had been confident all the big names would be present. Although the sport recently expanded to a record 157 affiliated countries, its leading nations and several of its most important tournaments have been badly hit by the withdrawal of

players and the collapse of Asian currencies.

Two big tournaments, the Korean Open and the Thailand Open, have already been cancelled, and a third, the Indonesian Open at Sulawesi, in August is at risk. The Thomas and Uber Cups finals, scheduled for Hong Kong in May, may be switched to England.

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# Atherton hopes net practice will make perfect

## Cricket

By Henry Blofield  
in Bridgetown

**Barbados** 472-6 dec  
England 372-7

ENGLAND'S three-day game against Barbados meandered on as a pleasant enough exercise in the sun on another lovely Caribbean day. Much of the bowling was done by the spinners and bore little or no resemblance to what we can expect in the fifth Test which begins here on Thursday.

None the less, in general terms, practice in the middle is much more valuable than net practice. This point is in no way made as a tacit criticism of Mike Atherton, who chose to have strenuous nets each day instead of playing against Barbados.

The chairman of the selectors, David Graveney, who arrived in Barbados last weekend, principally to supervise the acclimatisation and practice of the seven players who are coming out from England for the one-day internationals which start at the end of the month, said

during the day that Atherton had been talking on the telephone to Graham Gooch. His predecessor will have given Atherton points to work on, in which case net practice can then be more valuable as the precise circumstances of each can be re-created time and again – which cannot, of course, be done in the middle.

Atherton's shortage of runs – he has scored just 96 in his last seven Test innings – is causing more concern than it should be. The first three Tests, four if you include Sabina Park in which he was out for two, were played on bad pitches and against two of the best fast bowlers in the world. Atherton's low scores must be seen in this perspective and his 49 played an important part in helping England to win in Trinidad.

His main problem, which Gooch has surely got him working on, is his method of playing back. Like so many contemporary batsmen, when he plays back there is not much movement back towards the stumps and most of the time he ends up square on to the bowler with his toes pointing down the pitch at mid-off.

Even if he has not been able to tinker successfully with the mechanism of this stroke, Atherton will find the pitch at Kensington Oval much more to his liking. He made more than 200 runs in the Barbados and Antigua Tests four years ago which helped to make up for a poor start to that series too.

But four years ago England came to the Barbados Test three matches down with the series lost. Now, they are 2-1 down and if Atherton, who says his batting does not feel out of sorts, can again take advantage of the even bounce here, he could play a significant part in helping England get back on level terms.

The four main batsmen on show yesterday against Barbados – Nasser Hussain, Graham Thorpe, Mark Ramprakash and Adam Hollioake – all had useful spells in the middle before getting themselves out to careless strokes. It was a pity that no one went on to make a century, but at least none of the batsmen wasted their chances.

England's net practice yesterday was a success, with the players all agreeing that the results were encouraging.

**Final day of Test:** England won by 10 wickets. Final score: Barbados 472-6 dec; England 372-7. Umpires: D R Hockley (Eng) and S R Venner (Barb). Match referee: D A J Treadaway (Eng). Broadcast: BBC 2 (TV); Radio 4 (radio).

**Scorecard:** Barbados 1-100; 2-100; 3-100; 4-100; 5-100; 6-100; 7-100; 8-100; 9-100; 10-100; 11-100; 12-100; 13-100; 14-100; 15-100; 16-100; 17-100; 18-100; 19-100; 20-100; 21-100; 22-100; 23-100; 24-100; 25-100; 26-100; 27-100; 28-100; 29-100; 30-100; 31-100; 32-100; 33-100; 34-100; 35-100; 36-100; 37-100; 38-100; 39-100; 40-100; 41-100; 42-100; 43-100; 44-100; 45-100; 46-100; 47-100; 48-100; 49-100; 50-100; 51-100; 52-100; 53-100; 54-100; 55-100; 56-100; 57-100; 58-100; 59-100; 60-100; 61-100; 62-100; 63-100; 64-100; 65-100; 66-100; 67-100; 68-100; 69-100; 70-100; 71-100; 72-100; 73-100; 74-100; 75-100; 76-100; 77-100; 78-100; 79-100; 80-100; 81-100; 82-100; 83-100; 84-100; 85-100; 86-100; 87-100; 88-100; 89-100; 90-100; 91-100; 92-100; 93-100; 94-100; 95-100; 96-100; 97-100; 98-100; 99-100; 100-100.

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## Protest fails to overturn Hakkinen's victory

### Motor racing

By Derek Allsop

MICHAEL HAKKINEN's victory in the Australian Grand Prix on Sunday will stand - though the "pre-arranged" finish with his McLaren-Mercedes team-mate, David Coulthard, which let him in for victory, may be outlawed later this month.

The FIA, Formula One's governing body, turned down a protest from the Australian organisers yesterday, but said the practice of a gentleman's agreement could be banned when the

World Motor Council meets on 18 March.

"Team orders specifying the finishing order of drivers within a team have existed in motor sport since the beginning of the century," the FIA said in a statement. "It would therefore not be right to criticise or sanction McLaren for what it did."

The real problem, though, is that Ron Dennis, the managing director of McLaren, must know that he has it within his power to make or break the Formula One world championship as a viable contest.

First races can be misleading,

because not all the teams, even bigger ones, are totally prepared. Conventional wisdom maintains that the championship proper begins when they arrive in Europe for the fourth round, the San Marino Grand Prix.

This year, however, it appears improbable that any team will be able to make sufficient progress to threaten McLaren's obvious superiority. They lapped the rest without extending themselves in Melbourne, raising the prospect of a whitewash that eluded them by just one race out of 16 in 1988.

The redeeming feature of

that year was the magnificent duel by the McLaren drivers Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost, the former eventually shading it eight wins to seven. Formula One now turns to Coulthard and Hakkinen to save this year.

Team arrangements are nothing new in motor racing and McLaren were involved in controversy at the final race of last season when Williams-Jacques Villeneuve, assured of the title, allowed Hakkinen and Coulthard to pass him in the closing stages.

At Melbourne the co-operation was purely inhouse, McLaren were confident they had a performance advantage over their opponents, but were uncertain of their reliability and so accommodated their drivers' agreement that whoever made it to the first corner in front would be granted victory.

Formula One is a team game and that made sound team sense, but it is also a public spectacle for which trackside customers and television companies around the world pay substantial sums.

Coulthard's extravagant gesture in slowing down for Hakkinen, who found himself trailing after a mix-up over a pitstop,

two laps from the end of the race, understandably irked the huge crowd and the organisers.

FIA

may not welcome Coulthard's words in anticipation of a comfortable victory at the next race in Brazil.

"I am expecting to be repaid. I could have won the opening race, but hopefully we will put this to bed after the next race and carry on from there," he said. "After two races we should be on an even keel, so there won't be a points disadvantage."

Dennis contends his no-risk policy is justified for another race, but maybe persuaded otherwise. At the very least, he is likely to make sure any "arrangement" is not as blatant.

And yet this has to be seen to be a race, otherwise it has no credibility and ultimately will have no appeal. After all, Mansell's overtaking manoeuvre against Piquet in the 1986 British Grand Prix remains one of Formula One's most thrilling moments.

Coulthard and Hakkinen are well matched and capable of giving us a similarly compelling championship this year, that would cover McLaren and Formula One in glory.

Bookmakers make betting changes, page 24

## Woodward will drop tour rebels

### Rugby Union

By Chris Hewett

ENGLAND'S professional clubs look certain to lose the political battle over this summer's four-Test tour of the southern hemisphere, but they remain confident of winning their wider war with Twickenham. Clive Woodward, the England coach, will take a full-strength party to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa whether the mutinous power-brokers of the Premiership like it or not, but the Rugby Football Union face huge problems in their attempt to secure contractual control over the red rose elite.

As the ramifications of Northampton's decision to bar their international contingents from all summer tours continued to reverberate yesterday, an emotional but unrepentant Woodward wrapped himself in the Union flag and justified the stand that threatens three leading Saints - Paul Grayson, Tim Rodber and Matt Dawson - with Five Nations oblivion.

"I'm not a bully, I haven't cajoled anyone into doing anything and I'm certainly not in the business of forcing players to choose between club and country," he said. "I'm simply saying that I will not countenance a third party, Northampton in this case, telling me who I can and can't pick for England. I can't do the job if that is going to be the case."

"No one at the RFU tells me how to run this team and I sure as hell have no intention of being held to ransom by the club owners. All I'm interested in is

building a side capable of winning the World Cup next year and at the moment it feels like a knife is being put through our dreams. "Of course I feel for the Northampton guys, but if they can't make themselves available for this tour they will not play against Scotland on Saturday week. That goes for everyone else, too."

Those words effectively torpedoed the Northampton initiative and there were signals last night that Keith Barwell, the Saints owner, was considering a climb-down.

Woodward, who has forged a close and mutually supportive relationship with "Club England" players since taking over as coach last autumn, was backed to the hilt by Jeremy Guscott, still the most glittering jewel in the England crown and one of only two players present at Twickenham yesterday. "Players love playing for their clubs, but ultimately they want to play for their country," he agreed. "I'm available to tour - I'm determined to retain the right to play for England and when I and the selectors wish - and as far as I'm aware, every other member of the squad feels likewise."

Both Cotton and Brittle, the RFU chairman, denied making any contractual approach to Lawrence Dallaglio, the England captain. They did, however, admit that discussions had taken place with representatives of Gary Connolly, the Wigan rugby league centre.

The Australians have made their position clear by calling on the IRB, rugby's world governing body, to enforce the clause in their charter demanding that countries send their strongest possible sides on Test tours.

Woodward will this week ask each of his players to confirm their availability, and he will then select his side for the Calcutta Cup match at Murrayfield on Sunday.

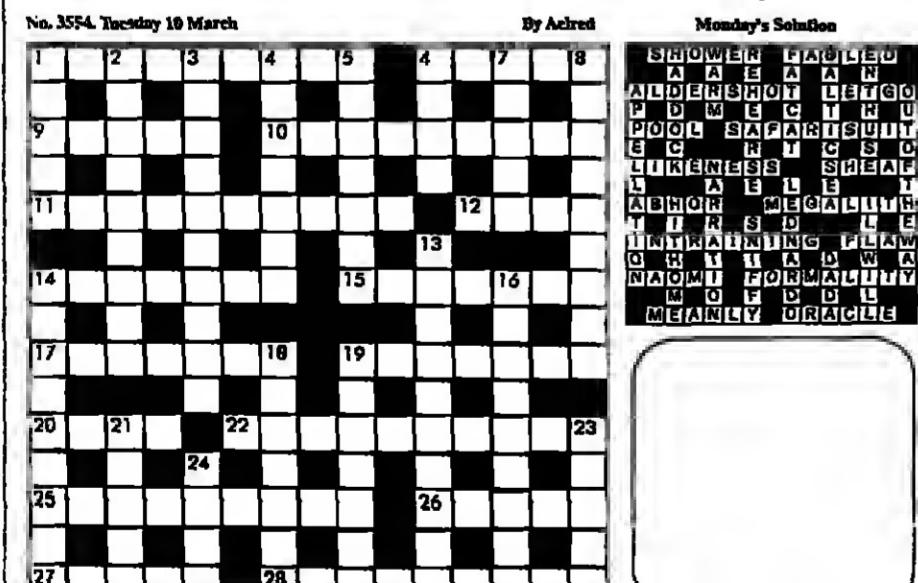
Ireland unchanged, page 24

### THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3554. Tuesday 10 March

By Achred

Monday's Solution



- ACROSS  
1 Threely involved in hardships of actors (4,5)  
2 Fill-in makes a reflective attempt to buy about a pound (2,3)  
3 Show superiority holding a wild type (5)  
4 Applied heat to men in a poor condition (4-5)  
11 Was attentive to duty in cathedral by day in a meritorious way (10)  
12 People at university will get a choice (4)  
14 Bridge players in trail for backer (7)  
15 It will produce print of trees axed (7)  
17 Priest carries woman's basket (7)  
19 Sort of memory can upset European in love affair (7)
- DOWN  
1 Fancy gear can be the fashion (4)  
2 Rod runs out to meet English hospital worker (5,5)  
3 I bear main strains of cook's requirement (4-5)  
4 Assign a charge for crossing and coming back (5)  
5 Church official led off to Queen (5)  
6 Fancy biscuit's a favourite thing to give to quartet (5,4)  
7 Die unexpectedly getting doctor in fix (5)  
8 Feathers providing answer in south-west county (9)  
9 Exotic fruit is cut to an advanced design (10)  
10 Companion of left-wing Lord (7)  
12 Discharge from dismissed and dismembered fowl (4)

TREVOR FRANCIS has withdrawn his resignation as the manager of Birmingham City.

Francis quit St Andrew's on Saturday evening after his son, Matthew, was verbally abused by a section of supporters during a 1-0 First Division win over Queen's Park Rangers. Yesterday, though, Francis said that the "overwhelming and magnificent" support of the club's fans was instrumental in persuading him to reverse his decision.

Francis held talks in Oxfordshire with Birmingham's chairman, David Gold, on Sunday and said: "I have been given certain assurances that things will change in the future. I have been quite overwhelmed by the reaction of the fans and their support has been a large factor in my decision."

The Leeds manager, George Graham, will study video evidence of the head-butting incident involving his striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink and the Wolves defender Keith Curle during Saturday's FA Cup quarter-final before deciding whether to punish the Dutch striker. Hasselbaink was

confronted by a taunting Curle after missing a penalty he had won. Graham said: "I have not seen the incident yet but if it is proved it was a head-but I will take action."

Wolves semi-final against Arsenal or West Ham will be played at Villa Park on 5 April. The other tie that day, Newcastle against Coventry or Sheffield United, will be staged at Old Trafford.

Bradford City and Bury have been fined £25,000 each, with £20,000 suspended until the end of the 1998-99 season, following a brawl between the two teams in December.

Darren Barnard has been called up by Wales - even though the defender was born in Germany and is a former England Schools international. The Barnsley wing-back has been picked for the friendly against Jamaica at Ninian Park, Cardiff, on 25 March.

### Klinsmann paints picture of Spurs disarray

THE Tottenham Hotspur striker Jürgen Klinsmann has said that he was representing the views of other players when he had his much-publicised argument with the White Hart Lane club's coach, Christian Gross, last week.

Speaking in an interview with the German magazine *Kicker*, Klinsmann said his

dispute with Gross came after other Tottenham players had asked him to intervene.

"When I was signed by Tottenham I was expected by all sides to take responsibility in the fight against relegation," the German international captain said. "I did that after seeing that many things here are in a mess and don't function. There was

a lot of tension between the players and the coach. I tried repeatedly to be the diplomat and to close the gap. But for weeks nothing happened, there was no reaction."

Klinsmann, who has said he is leaving Spurs when his contract expires in the summer, rowed with Gross over tactics and team selection last week.

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©Published by Newspaper Publishing PLC, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, and printed at Mirror Colour Print, St Albans Road, Watford.

Back issues available from Historic Newspapers, 01992 840370.

Tuesday 10 March 1998 Registered as a newspaper with the Post Office

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